Subject: Subdividing Significant Historic Interior Spaces

Applicable Standards: 2. Retention of Historic Character  
5. Preservation of Distinctive Features, Finishes, and Craftsmanship

Issue: It is often necessary as part of a rehabilitation project to subdivide a multi-story space in a historic building to meet requirements for the new use. Large, significant, character-defining interior spaces can be either formal spaces, such as those in churches, auditoriums, retail and department stores, or rougher, less finished spaces, such as those found in industrial or warehouse buildings, barns and gymnasiums. Subdivision of such spaces must preserve their character-defining aspects in order to meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

Application (Compatible treatment): This three-story building, originally constructed in 1923 as a department store with retail and warehouse space, was rehabilitated for commercial and residential use. The upper floors

Left: This three-story building (shown after rehabilitation) was constructed in 1923 for use as a department store.

Prior to rehabilitation the one and one-half story space and mezzanine (above and below) were in poor condition after years of neglect.
These bulletins are issued to explain preservation project decisions made by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The resulting determinations, based on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, are not necessarily applicable beyond the unique facts and circumstances of each particular case.

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May 2007, ITS Number 41