



Subject: Interior Alterations to School Buildings to Accommodate New Uses

- Applicable Standards:
1. Compatible Use
 2. Retention of Historic Character
 5. Preservation of Distinctive Features, Finishes and Craftsmanship
 9. Compatible New Additions/Alterations

Issue: The rehabilitation of any historic building should take into consideration the preservation of significant interior spaces, materials, and features that define the building's historic character. Choosing a compatible new use for a historic building that retains interior character-defining features can be challenging but, with planning and care, produces satisfactory results.

Application (Compatible treatment): A school was rehabilitated into 24 market-rate residential apartments. Begun in 1893, and dedicated in 1898, the two-story brick building was enlarged in 1926 by the addition of three bays and a third story. Details used on the 1926 addition were identical to those of the original structure. Both the interior and exterior of the recently vacated school were in nearly pristine condition prior to rehabilitation.

The simple plan of the school followed directly from the rectangular footprint of the buildings: classrooms and cloakrooms on each side of a central corridor with stairwells at either end. The two identical staircases, each rising from the basement to the third story, were separated from the corridor by sets of glazed fire doors with multi-paned transoms and sidelights. Panelled and glass doors with transoms lined the halls, which also retained their wainscoting, baseboard, coat hooks, metal or plaster ceilings, and wood cove molding. The large classrooms retained similar features, and some even contained original lighting fixtures and built-in cabinets. All molded window and door casings remained.



The school after rehabilitation. Windows, doors, and transoms were repaired. The building was not cleaned.



The plan after rehabilitation showing the successful insertion of approximately one unit per classroom.

A comparison of before and after photographs documents the sympathetic rehabilitation work. In the hallways, transoms were retained but infilled with fire-rated drywall on the classroom side, the coat hooks were removed, a sprinkler and fire safety system was installed, some doors were fixed in place, and carpeting was installed. Otherwise, the hallways were kept intact. Six apartments were created on each floor - three on each side of the corridors. With few exceptions, the plan was retained by inserting only one unit per classroom.



Second floor hallway prior to rehabilitation.



Second floor hallway after rehabilitation. Note retention of historic fabric.

Living rooms, dining rooms, and bedrooms were located against exterior walls and all trim was retained, as well as full-height ceilings (some of which are pressed metal). Kitchens, bathrooms and closets were located on interior walls or within former cloakrooms. Ceilings were dropped only in the utilitarian spaces to allow for mechanical and plumbing equipment. One laundry room per floor was inserted in the original ventilation stack. The existing staircases were retained intact.

By restricting the number and size of the new units and their associated amenities, the school was easily converted to residential use. The historic character of this building has been preserved by retaining historic features, fabric, and plan.



Second floor cloakroom, prior to rehabilitation.



Second floor cloakroom, after rehabilitation. Register circulates heat and air conditioning.

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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.