



ITS  
NUMBER 55

## Interpreting The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

**Subject:** Retaining Industrial Character in Historic Buildings

**Applicable Standards:**

1. Compatible Use
2. Retention of Historic Character
5. Preservation of Distinctive Features, Finishes, and Craftsmanship

**Issue:** Derelict industrial structures that are no longer needed or suited for their intended purpose are often rehabilitated for new uses. Industrial buildings typically consist of large open spaces. The interiors are usually unfinished with exposed brick walls, exposed beams, structural columns and ceiling trusses. In some cases, it can be challenging to preserve these features that are so crucial in defining the historic character of these buildings, particularly when the new use may be very different from the original. The first thing that must be considered when planning to rehabilitate an industrial building is that the proposed new use must be compatible with its historic character to meet Standard 1 of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. If an appropriate new use is chosen and the rehabilitation is undertaken in accordance with the Standards, the new use will result in retention of historic character and preservation of distinctive features, finishes and craftsmanship.

**Application 1** (*Compatible treatment*): This historic car barn was built c. 1893, originally to house streetcars and remained in use until it was closed in the 1990s when a new facility was constructed. After years of disuse, it was proposed to be converted into a grocery store. The sheer size and volume of the interior proved to be a good match for the new use. The car barn was large enough that the grocery store itself could fit into the front half of the building, leaving the rear portion available for parking. The openness and immense height of the interior with its exposed metal structural system contributes to the market's appeal and is also ideal for the parking area which, after all, was the building's original use. New corrugated metal replaced the rusted historic metal sheathing on the exterior. The large historic vehicular openings on the back allow access to the parking and also provide ventilation. The vehicular doors on the front were infilled with a butt glass storefront system to retain the open appearance the building had historically. This project meets the Standards.

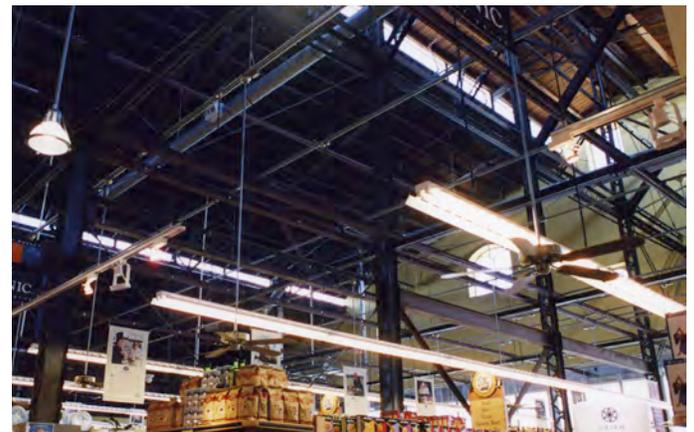


*Above: The historic bus barn before rehabilitation.*

*Below: The historic bus barn after conversion to a grocery store. A butt glazed storefront was installed in the former garage bays to retain the sense of openness.*



*Left and Right: The exposed trusses on the interior, both in the parking area and in the grocery store, emphasize the structure's industrial character.*



**Application 2 (Compatible treatment):** This small brick garment factory was constructed c. 1930 with later expansions. After being vacant for many years the building was rehabilitated as low-to-moderate income residential units. The character-defining industrial metal windows were retained where possible, while those that were deteriorated beyond repair were replaced to match the existing. Bricked-up windows were reopened and matching windows were installed. The simple metal canopy over the entrance in the front was retained and the deteriorated corrugated metal siding on one elevation was replaced to match. The industrial nature of the building is also clearly evidenced on the interior in the exposed wood ceiling and metal trusses. Even the large fans that cooled the sewing area of the factory were incorporated as decorative elements in a fence at the rear of the building. This project has preserved the industrial character of the structure and meets the Standards.



*Clockwise from top:*  
 A. The early-twentieth century garment factory before rehabilitation.  
 B. After rehabilitation, historic windows shine again after repair and paint removal. New windows have been installed in bricked-up openings and new matching windows have replaced historic windows too deteriorated to repair.  
 C. Old fans have been reused decoratively as part of a fence around the parking lot.  
 D & E. Accented by new industrial lighting fixtures, the historic character of the interior is clearly expressed in the exposed wood and steel beams and trusses, as well as in the original concrete floor.



**Application 3 (Compatible treatment):** A group of early-twentieth century factory buildings, the oldest of which dates to c. 1908, was rehabilitated into a multi-use residential, retail and commercial complex. As part of the rehabilitation, the existing windows--both wood and metal--were retained and repaired or, where necessary, replaced to match. Compatible, partially-glazed infill was installed in many of the loading dock openings on the first floor. An existing corrugated metal industrial bridge connecting two buildings was retained and the ruined walls of a fire-damaged structure were also retained as part of the complex. On the interior, mushroom-capped columns and the unfinished cast concrete ceiling were left exposed throughout. Historic metal fire doors were also kept and secured in an open position. This project, too, meets the Standards.



*Clockwise from left:*  
 A. After rehabilitation, this section of the factory complex includes a restaurant and shops on the first floor with apartments on the upper floors. Partially-glazed infill in the loading door openings is compatible with the character of the building. B & C. The historic industrial bridge was retained, as were the ruins of walls that remained after a fire. D & E. The industrial nature of the interior is evident in the mushroom-capped cast concrete columns and the fire doors that remain in several of the buildings.

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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.