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A Change for the Better: Modern Steel Windows Offer Timeless Beauty and Endless Possibilities

The strong, customizable, flexible and safe choice

September 25, 2018—In the late 1800s, your grandparents might have gone to work in a factory with steel windows. Yet steel windows were pretty much unheard of in other types of buildings. Today, modern commercial and residential design trends are leading architects and building owners back to the beautiful and practical steel window for a wide range of creative designs and innovative uses. They will see how much steel window profiles and features have changed from those employed in factories back then. Modern steel windows and doors are customizable, thermally efficient, impact- and blast-resistant, and offer an array of finishes unimaginable 120 years ago—or even 30 years ago.

Fast forward from the 1800s to the industrial revolution, when architects began to integrate steel windows into buildings across the United States because, among other advantages, they were more fire-resistant than previously available options and provided architects with greater flexibility in design. After World War II, steel windows began to fade from the scene, but gradually, as architects and designers sought stronger windows and narrower sightlines, the practice of using steel windows re-emerged.

In the 21st century, modern architects and building owners are responding to consumers' demands for office buildings and residences with more pleasant sightlines and greater natural light. Many are looking to steel windows and doors as the ideal solution. And beauty isn't the only benefit.

With their unparalleled strength, steel windows are used today in almost every imaginable building type, from universities to hospitals, private homes to churches, office buildings to museums. Additionally, their strength allows window designers nearly unlimited creativity—and gives building owners the peace of mind that strength provides. In addition to their structural strength and superior fire resistance, steel windows meet the most stringent building requirements for blast resistance and impact resistance.

Beyond their strength and safety, thinner steel window profiles can also be breathtakingly beautiful. With modern metal pretreatment processes and top coats, window manufacturers are producing more attractive products that also require minimal maintenance. A variety of factory-applied finishes, including but not limited to zinc coating, electro-coat (e-coat) primer, powder coatings, urethane enamels, and corrosion-inhibiting coatings, make these windows a highly desirable design feature. Additionally, advances in steel window design such as insulated glass and thermally broken/enhanced frames now allow energy efficiencies unheard of many years ago.

Not only are steel windows strong and beautiful in a structure, they also bring beautiful benefits to interior spaces. A 2015 World Green Building Council report, "Health, Wellbeing and Productivity in Offices," notes the importance of natural light and windows, saying, "Several studies in the last decade have estimated productivity gains as a result of [workers'] proximity to windows." The use of steel windows inside buildings has also helped to fuel the popularity of unique and inspiring workspaces. For example, steel windows and doors are increasingly being specified for interior use to give spaces a fashionable industrial vibe.

When designers and architects construct today's workspaces, which often have open office plans, they are specifying steel windows more and more to provide the strength, durability, beauty, and customizability that help make time at work more meaningful. The same is true for residential buildings: providing more natural light and wide, less-obstructed views are leading to an uptick in the use of steel windows.

The evolution of steel windows since the late 19th century isn't just interesting history; it has spurred an exciting movement toward a combination of strength and beauty with both classic and modern attributes. For architects and building owners, steel windows and doors provide a timeless, familiar, and beneficial window solution.

For more information on steel windows and doors, visit the Steel Window Institute website at <http://www.steelwindows.com>. The website provides comprehensive specifications and installation guidelines for various types of steel windows and doors. Many downloadable resources, including the Architect's Guide to Steel Windows and various product sourcing guides, provide additional information.

The members of SWI are leading manufacturers of windows and doors made from either solid hot-rolled or formed sections of steel and related products such as casings, trim, mechanical operators, screens, and moldings that are manufactured and sold by members of the industry for use with steel windows and doors. SWI provides the public with general and technical information concerning the industry's products. Proprietary specifications produced by each SWI member are available from individual members upon request.

For more information, please contact the Steel Window Institute, 1300 Sumner Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115-2851. Phone: 216-241-7333; fax: 216-241-0105. On the web: <http://www.steelwindows.com/>.

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