



State of New Jersey
DELAWARE AND RARITAN CANAL COMMISSION
PRALLSVILLE MILLS | 33 RISLER STREET | P.O. BOX 539
STOCKTON, N.J. 08559-0539
www.nj.gov/dep/drcc



STAFF REPORT

DRCC #: 26-6349

DATE: February 5, 2026

PROJECT NAME: 202 North Union Street -- Second Story Safety Railing

Latest Submission Received: January 8, 2026

Applicant:

Christopher Caputo
236 Creekside Drive
New Hope, PA 18938
ccaputo@trailmark.com

Engineer:

Gary O'Connor, A.I.A.
Gary R. O'Connor – Architect, LLC
204 N. Union Street, Suite 105
Lambertville, NJ 08530
gary@grocarchitects.com

Project Location:

| Road | Municipality | County | Block(s) | Lot(s) |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|--------|
| North Union Street | Lambertville City | Hunterdon | 1008 | 21 |

Jurisdictional Determination:

| | | |
|--------|-------|-----------------|
| Zone A | Minor | Nongovernmental |
|--------|-------|-----------------|

Subject to Review for:

| Drainage | Visual | Traffic | Stream Corridors |
|----------|--------|---------|------------------|
| | X | | |

Documents Received: Application received January 8, 2026; Railing details image received February 4, 2026.

**THIS STAFF REPORT IS ISSUED AS A GUIDE TO APPLICANTS IN
COMPLYING WITH DRCC REGULATIONS. IT IS NOT AN APPROVAL. NO
CONSTRUCTION SHALL BEGIN UNTIL A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL
HAS BEEN ISSUED.**

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The application is complete and shall be presented to the Commission for their action with a staff recommendation of approval at the February 18, 2026, meeting based upon the following analysis:

Existing Conditions: The project site is a 29,621 square-foot (0.68 acre) lot located on the easterly side of North Union Street in the City of Lambertville, Hunterdon County, approximately 363 feet east of the Delaware and Raritan Canal and within Commission Review Zone A. The project site is bounded by a combination of attached and semi-detached residential development to the north, south, and east, while residential development and a commercial lumberyard are located to the west.



In the existing condition, the site is improved with a three-story, brick building constructed in 1881 in the Second Empire Style that is visible on historic aerial imagery dating to 1951.



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Proposed Project: The applicant proposes to install a safety railing for fall protection purposes on the second-floor, double door opening located on the north façade of the project site building (see highlighted area in the image below). The project would not result in the creation of any impervious surface coverage or the disturbance of any land.



Stream Corridor: There are no streams or mapped watercourses on the project site, the nearest being a tributary of the Delaware River known locally as Ely Creek, which runs beneath the canal and is partially conveyed in a pipe, located approximately 420 feet to the north. Therefore, the project is not subject to stream corridor impact review pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:45-9.1(a).

Stormwater Runoff & Water Quantity: The project does not propose an increase in impervious surface coverage. Therefore, the proposed project is not subject to stormwater runoff and water quality impact review pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.

Visual, Historic and Natural Quality Impact: N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.2(a) directs that the Commission shall review all projects in Zone A to determine if the project is in accord with the goals for the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park as defined in the park's Master Plan. The visual, historic, and natural quality impact review is intended to assure that development within Zone A is not harmful to the character of the environmental types identified in the Master Plan as comprising the park.

The project is located in an “Urban” canal environment as described in the Master Plan. The Urban canal environment name is characterized at N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.2(a) by the enclosure of the canal by dense development. The Master Plan states at Page 14 that goals for this section of the canal in the City of Lambertville are the completion of the multi-use trail and the placement of trees and shrubbery for definition and privacy. Therefore, nothing with respect to the proposed railing is incompatible with the Master Plan.

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The provisions of N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.3(a) and (b), respectively, which discourage projects within certain portions of Review Zone A and authorize the Commission to require specific compensatory measures that mitigate the project's potential for harmful impact on the park as a condition of approval, are inapplicable to the proposed project, which is located in an Urban canal environment.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(a) directs that the projects in Review Zone A shall be set back from the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park sufficiently far so that the winter visual and natural quality of the park are not adversely affected. In Urban canal environments, there are no minimum setbacks except as may be prescribed by municipal ordinances. The project is, therefore, in compliance with this requirement.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(b) directs that projects in Review Zone A shall maintain a reasonable height and scale relationship to nearby structures or vegetation. In the Urban canal environment, the height of structures may vary according to the height of existing structures that have a visual relationship to the proposed structure. The proposed safety railing would not alter the height of the existing building. Therefore, this requirement is inapplicable to the proposed project.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(c) directs that for projects in Review Zone A, the exterior appearances of a project shall be in keeping with the character of the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park's individual environments. Specifically, proposed building colors shall harmonize with the man-made or natural surroundings of the project and shall be typical of colors found in the park environment. Proposed building materials and textures shall harmonize with the surrounding man-made and natural materials.

The applicant proposes the installation of a 42 inch-high safety railing that has been fabricated by a craftsman in Trenton. The railing, which is shown in the image below, contains a wheel in the center, as an homage to the building's former association with the spoke works factory. The railing would be powder coated semi-gloss white prior to installation.



Commission staff, therefore, determines that the proposed railing materials and colors are typical of the built environment of the City of Lambertville, and that the project is in compliance with this requirement.

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The provisions of N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(d)1, which direct that for projects in Review Zone A, electric, telephone, cable television, and other such lines and equipment shall be underground or otherwise not visible from the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park, are inapplicable to the proposed project.

The provisions of N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(d)2, which direct that exposed storage areas, out-buildings, exposed machinery service areas, parking lots, loading areas, utility buildings, and similar ancillary areas and structures shall either be completely concealed from view from the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park or designed to minimize their visual impact on the park, are inapplicable to the project.

The provisions of N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(d)3 and 4, which regulate the dimensions and location of commercial signs or outdoor advertising structures, are inapplicable to the proposed project, which proposes no signage.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(d)5 directs that wherever possible, natural terrains, soils, stones, and vegetation should be preserved, and that new vegetation, stones, and soils should be native to the environment in which they are placed. The applicant proposes no new landscaping or the removal of any existing landscaping. This requirement is, therefore, inapplicable to the proposed project.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(d)6 directs that projects located in any officially designated Federal, State or local historic district or site shall be assessed for their impact upon that district or site. Recommendations to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate the impacts of a project on a listed property shall be made in consultation with the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and based upon the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings.

The project site is located outside of the boundaries of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Historic District, which encompasses the canal bed and all structures within 300 feet of the centerline of the canal. As noted above, the project site is located approximately 363 feet east of the canal.

The project is located within the boundaries of the Lambertville Historic District, which generally encompasses the area from Delaware River to N.J. State Highway Route No. Route 29 and N.J. State Highway Route No. 179 (Bridge Street), and from north of Cherry Lane to south of Weeden Street. The district was added to the National and State Registers of Historic Places in 1983.

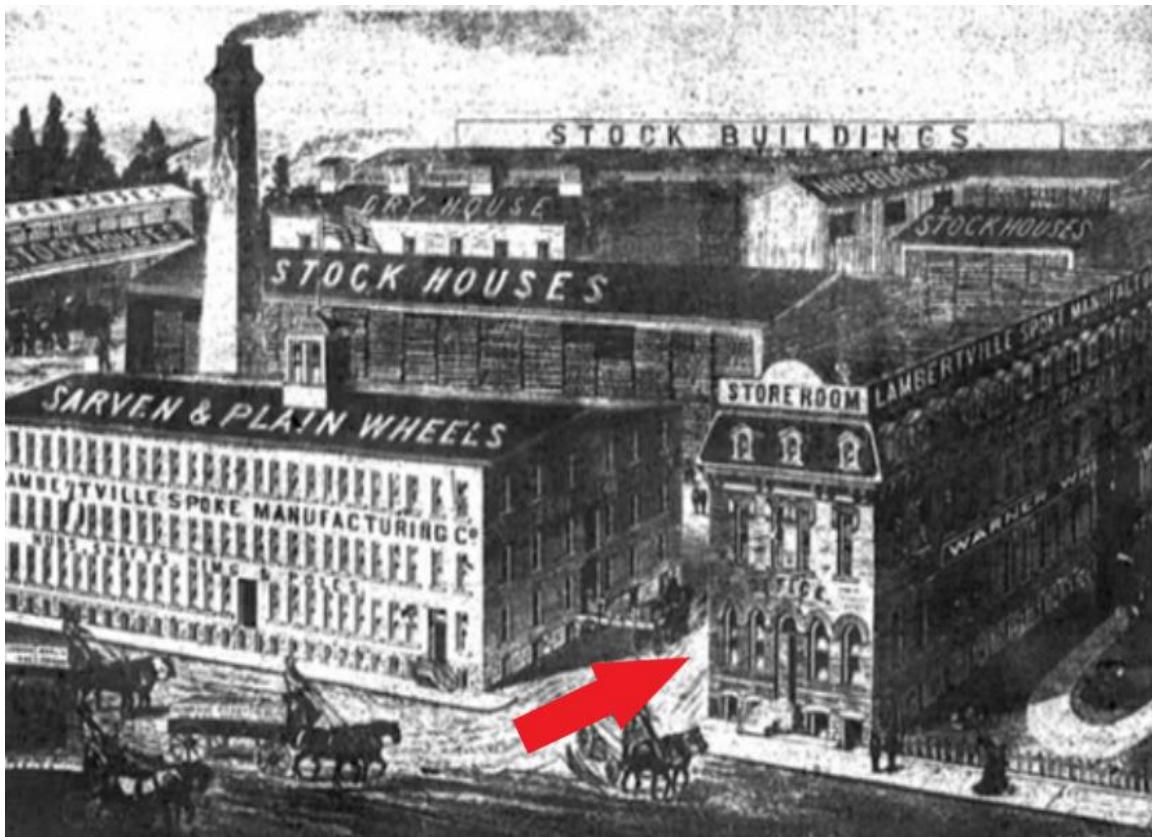
Historical Background: John Finney (1829-1894) was one of the wealthiest and most influential citizens of late 19th century Lambertville. He operated the Lambertville Spoke-Manufacturing Company, which manufactured products for carriage manufacturers and wheelwrights, including wheel spokes, rims, and felloes (the outer rim of a wheel, to which the spokes are inserted).

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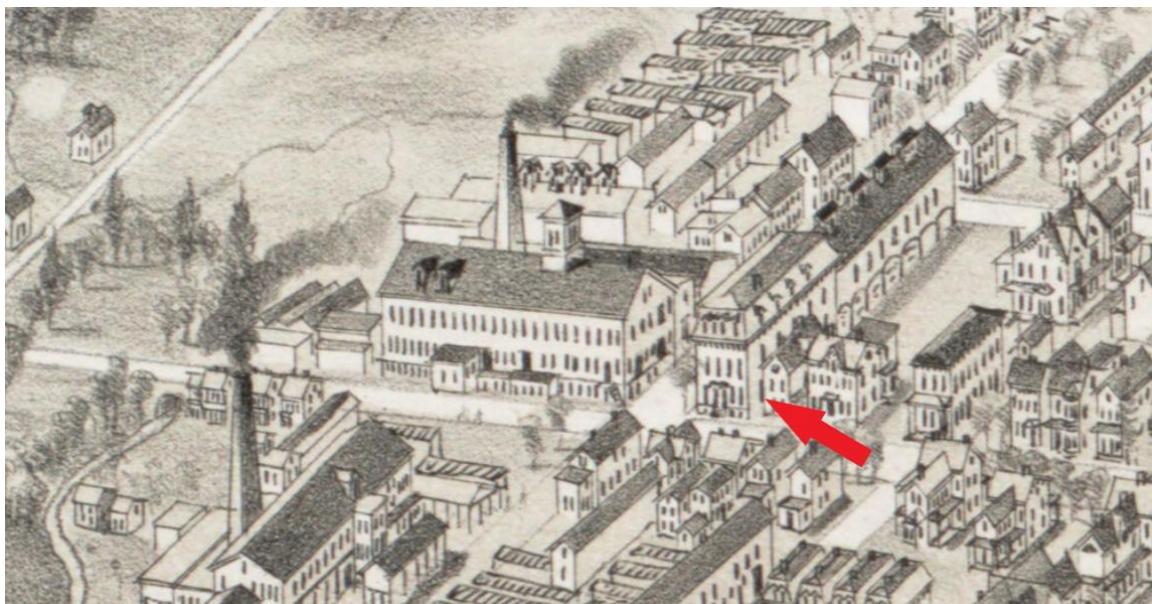
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The outbreak of the Civil War radically changed the company's fortunes for the better. During the war, the company built a substantial number of wheels, wooden underparts for carriages and wagons and supplied many of the caissons and cannon wheels for the Union Army. Logs were hauled to the mill and sawed into workable lengths in a building north of the project site, while the factory buildings were located across Elm Street and are visible on the left side of circa 1880 woodcut image.



(Circa 1880 woodcut image)



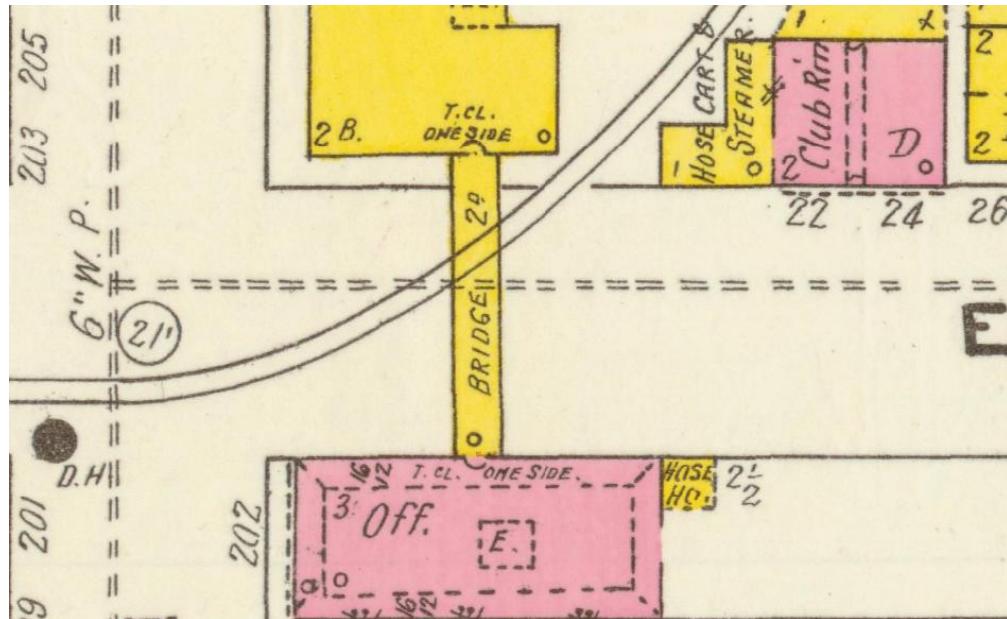
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(1883: View of Lambertville, New Jersey. O.H. Bailey)

In 1896 the spoke factory obtained permission from Lambertville Common Council to run a railroad spur line to their Elm Street yard. When the project site building was constructed as an office, showroom and storeroom for the spoke factory, a wooden bridge was built that connected the second floor of the Elm Street side of the building to the manufacturing buildings located across Elm street (See map image below). It is likely that the second-floor door, which requires the safety rail, was the location of this bridge over Elm Street.



(1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Co.)

The bridge remained intact until it was likely destroyed in a 1918 fire that burned several of the factory buildings to the north. Note that the railroad track is still visible in the 1919 image below after the building became L.D. Kerr's Ford Sales and Service.

The Lambertville Spoke-Manufacturing Company remained in operation until 1912, when the advent of the automobile ushered in the terminal decline of the carriage wheel business.

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(1919. Image: Henry Ford Museum)

Architectural Background: As its name implies, the Second Empire architectural style, also called the French Second Empire style or Mansard style, can be traced to France, specifically to the reign of Napoleon III (1852-1870). Under the emperor's direction, much of Paris was rebuilt with wide avenues and striking monumental buildings replacing medieval structures. The reconstruction of Paris in the Second Empire style had a major impact on building design throughout Europe and the United States. As public architecture, the style was meant to exude character and a sense of permanence. Residences designed in this style were, therefore, generally large and built for the affluent. At the peak of its popularity in the United States (1855-1885), the style was considered both fashionable and a contemporary statement of modernity. Its popularity led to a widespread remodeling boom in which Mansard or "French" roofs were incorporated into existing pitched-roof residences.

The style was most popular in the Northeast and Midwest and were generally built in more affluent regions. The Second Empire style in the United States was also notable in that it appropriated the design characteristics of several historical languages, thereby departing from the custom of imitating established idioms. This free adaptation, allowing architects far more leeway in their design, mirrored the belief that in America, one could pick and choose the best from the past. This philosophy drove a mix-and-match sensibility.

This eclecticism notwithstanding, the one constant of the style was the Mansard roof. Beneath these distinctive roofs, Second Empire buildings had much in common with other Victorian-era styles. Similarities between Second Empire and Italianate are found in their stylistic use of overhanging eaves with decorative brackets, and ornate door and window hoods.

Notable examples of Second Empire buildings in the United States include the Renwick Gallery (1859) and the Old Executive Office Building (1888) in Washington, D.C., as well as Philadelphia City Hall (1876). The style was so widely employed for government buildings, courthouses, post offices, and libraries in the post-Civil War period, that it was sometimes referred to as the "General Grant" style. The popularity of Second Empire

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architecture in the United States faded rapidly following the economic depression of 1873, and public revulsion at the political corruption of the Gilded Age. It was ultimately succeeded by the Queen Anne, Stick and Shingle styles.

The 1982 Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park Historic Structures Survey states that the project site building is of notable architectural significance. The front façade features a series of five arches with connecting brick lintels featuring a two-panel door in a semi-circular transom. The second-story front windows have projecting segmental arched lintels. The building is also unusual in that it combines a Second Empire roof with a series of Eastlake brackets. Commission staff observes that the project would not alter any of these architectural elements. Therefore, consultation with the SHPO is not warranted in this case.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends approval.

Sincerely,



John Hutchison
Executive Director

c. Hunterdon County Planning Board
City of Lambertville Planning Board

Please refer to the Commission project number (DRCC #) when making a submission, a resubmission, or transmitting project correspondence or documents.