

# Putting it all together

Features - Cover Profile

With the opening of its new 70,000-square-foot MRF, Mazza Recycling continues to expand operations as it evolves into a comprehensive provider of waste and recycling services in central New Jersey.



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October 7, 2020



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Photos by Tom Zapcic

Dominick Mazza Jr. (left) and James Mazza Jr.

Although blockbuster M&A deals may get the headlines, growth happens gradually for most waste and recycling companies.

This is especially true for family-run businesses like [Mazza Recycling](#).

According to Mazza Recycling President James Mazza Jr., the Tinton Falls, New Jersey-based company has had the benefit of building off of the hard work of previous generations as it has transformed its current operations.

Mazza was founded as a demolition and scrap metal recycling business by Dominick and James Mazza Sr. in 1964. Their sons, the second-generation owners, expanded the company's service offerings to include wood, concrete and tire recycling in the 1980s, and in 2001, built a 47,000-square-

foot solid waste transfer station in Tinton Falls with the capacity to recycle 1,100 tons of bulky and C&D waste daily.

Now, it's the company's third-generation leaders, James Mazza Jr. and Vice President Dominick Mazza Jr., who are working to carry on their grandfathers' and fathers' legacies to help take the 60-year-old company to the next level.



The Mazza Recycling team poses at the company's new 70,000-square-foot MRF

In 2015, the pair founded Mazza Mulch on a 10-acre site as a way to repurpose the wood and organics the company was collecting into mulch, compost and topsoil. That same year, as they moved into more of a leadership role, they began to conceptualize an opportunity to branch out operations to allow the company to become more of a full-service recycler within the community. All the while, the company continued to add collection and processing capacity.

“When James and I began overseeing operations around 2015, we determined there was an opportunity to turn the Tinton Falls transfer station into a full-service recycling center for all the community’s recycling and disposal needs,” Dominick Mazza Jr. says. “We began by starting a roll-off collection service, providing dumpsters to residents and contractors in Monmouth, Ocean and Middlesex counties [here in New Jersey]. We later expanded into front-end trash and recycling collection for commercial and industrial clients, which includes compactor solutions. ... Over the past few years, Mazza Recycling has focused on expanding our capacity to recycle curbside recyclables.”

With the wheels of opportunity spinning, Mazza’s executive team made the decision in 2016 to construct a new 70,000-square-foot MRF. The facility, which now processes cardboard, paper, metal, aluminum and plastics, was officially opened in September.

## Inside the facility

According to the company, the new MRF is the first on the East Coast to utilize positive sorting technology to separate inbound residential single-stream recyclables. The facility, which required a \$15 million investment, features a range of new sorting technologies.

The company partnered with Van Dyk Recycling Solutions, Norwalk, Connecticut, for the design and installation of new plant components. According to James Mazza Jr., working with Van Dyk was a collaborative process.



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"We worked with Van Dyk to determine the best and newest possible technology on the market," he says. "Me, Dominick [Mazza] and Van Dyk's team visited other newly designed MRFs across the nation to bring the most state-of-the-art MRF design to the East Coast for the first time."

Some of the notable investments Mazza made at the plant include sizing and optics technology such as optical screens and magnets to help sort mixed paper and OCC; plastic containers No. 1, 2 and 5; glass; and metal and aluminum cans. The Mazza Recycling plant features **Lubo** non-wrapping screens, a Lubo elliptical separator, **Tomra** optical sorters and numerous other components all integrated by Van Dyk.

While the investment in the plant has been substantial from both a time and monetary perspective, James says the new facility will be instrumental in helping Mazza serve the needs of the community.



"The current county plan is one where every town has their own collection program, and there are several sites, including ours, that receive material and transfer it to other processing facilities in other parts of the state," he says. "We are bringing this new facility to Monmouth County. Our three goals for this facility were to have one destination in the county to collect and process material, making recycling easier for the residents; to produce higher quality materials for end markets; and to pass on cost-savings to local municipalities."

James says that Mazza will be able to recycle approximately 130,000 tons per year out of this new facility. In addition to building out its infrastructure to amplify the volume of material able to be recycled locally, the company is also working to ensure the community is educated on what materials to place in their curbside bins to help reduce contamination.

Dominick says that in 1986, the recycling rate in the state was just 10 percent. Today, New Jersey's recycling rate has climbed to 60 percent "and we are looking to push that higher with this new facility," he says.

“We plan to coordinate with surrounding municipalities in order to educate the residents on the proper way to recycle,” he continues. “A big part of our program is the recent launch of our ‘A Greener Tomorrow’ education initiative where we go into schools to educate our youth on how to properly recycle. ... We hope the facility [and this program] will be a giant step forward in the progression of recycling, waste reduction and sustainability.”

As part of its push for greater sustainability, the company outfitted its plant with new solar panels. These panels will help power operations by providing upwards of 900,000 kW hours of power to the site each year.

While the new facility marks a substantial chapter in the company’s history, James says that the company isn’t resting on its laurels. Instead, Mazza is looking into opportunities to expand its operations beyond central New Jersey.

“We have identified areas in New Jersey and across the country with outdated recycling technology or that lack recycling facilities altogether,” he says. “These communities are either trucking their recyclables to distant locations to be recycled, which increases emissions and increases cost to the communities, or they are not recycling to their potential. It is our goal to find a solution for those problems.”



## Building together

As one might expect from a family-run company, employee loyalty has played a big role as Mazza Recycling has grown. Dominick says that many of the company’s 155 employees have been with Mazza for years, and this loyalty is often repaid with opportunities to advance internally.

“While James and I focus on strategy, implementing new technologies and software solutions to continue our growth, we developed a strong team of managers and supervisors which we are confident we can rely on to maintain operations. ... We also take pride in promoting employees from within the company,” Dominick says. “We have many employees who started as entry-level employees and through their hard work and enthusiasm to learn, are now equipment operators, supervisors and management-level staff. We’ve recently had multiple employees who have reached their 30-year anniversary with the company, which is a testament to the family environment we have promoted over the years.”

Although James and Dominick both say the knowledge imparted by their fathers has been instrumental in helping them build the company, they feel their perspective as part of the next generation is an asset that allows them to assess opportunities from a new vantage point.

“With James and I both under 40 years of age, we are constantly looking at the recycling industry from an unconventional point of view,” Dominick says. “We have hired a team of managers who bring experience from within the recycling industry, as well as outside the industry, including experience from the construction, power and fuel industries. These managers give James and I the experience and outside-the-box thinking needed to keep building a robust and diverse recycling company.”