

# Baker High School, Baker City, Oregon: High School Students Create a Brownfields Inventory and Engage in Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup

Megan Alameda, June 2018

Imagine turning local high school students in a small, rural town into environmental health experts! That's exactly what happened in Baker City Oregon. Megan Alameda, the Brownfield Instructor & Program Coordinator at Baker Technical Institute (BTI) taught her students how to use the ATSDR Site Tool to identify, inventory, assess, and manage the cleanup of brownfields sites.

Baker School District's BTI offers the only high school-run brownfield program in the country. Over the past five years, students managed the cleanup of their first brownfield property and learned that Baker City has the second highest number of brownfields per capita in Oregon. They not only raised brownfield awareness, but also used the Site Tool to help the City write an EPA Community Wide Assessment Grant.

Students mapped dozens of potential brownfields in their community, collected and organized data on contaminants, and presented their findings to the City Council. This evidence helped convince the City to support and submit an application for an EPA Community Wide Assessment Grant.

The application focused on assessing 25 brownfields sites in 30 blocks. These assessments will help the City understand the extent of contamination in their business corridors and will help property owners take a valuable step in making their property business ready.

Petroleum was the main contaminant in these brownfields. Shallow groundwater, a river running through town, and sensitive populations living in these areas make the contamination a concern for community members.

Unfortunately, EPA did not select the City of Baker for Brownfields funding in the most current cycle. However, the Site Tool helped the high school program gain momentum for progress in applying for the grant and achieving their economic goals to redevelop and reuse as many of the 25 sites as possible.

The program students now have experience using the Site Tool. They will continue their work on

assessing and cleaning up brownfields in their community, using the tool to prioritize and maintain a database of these properties.

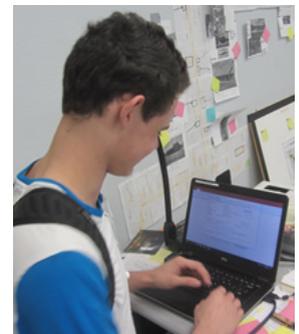
BTI and a new Brownfields instructor will continue to inspire the next group of brownfield remediation students to work with city officials to submit a new funding proposal to EPA. This program not only provides teaching and learning across the curriculum, but it also encourages good citizenship and practical contributions to the community. That's a win-win!

*Until late 2018, Megan Alameda was the Brownfield Instructor & Program Coordinator at Baker Technical Institute, in Baker City, Oregon. Alameda's high school students are brownfields experts who help to identify, inventory, assess, and manage the cleanup of brownfields sites.*

**Figure 1: Brownfields Mapped in Baker City, Oregon. Source: Baker Technical Institute, 2017**



**Figure 2. Baker Technical Institute Student Entering Site Information into Site Tool: Source: BTI, 2017**



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for Environmental Health  
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