



Students apply lessons from BLM Cadastral Survey curriculum to win prestigious award



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Story by Tammie Adams, Writer/Editor. Photo courtesy of Theresa Back, Future City Competition Coach and Gifted and Talented Coordinator.

Editor's note: Part one of this story, ["BLM Indian Lands Surveyor teaches Cadastral Survey curriculum to middle schoolers,"](#) ran in the BLM Daily last week. In part two of the story, the BLM Daily highlights a prestigious land surveying award the students from Scott Highlands Middle School won as a direct result of applying the knowledge they learned from the BLM's Cadastral Survey [Classroom Investigation](#), taught by Kenneth Roy, BLM Indian Lands Surveyor, in November 2023.

The BLM recently received an update about the students from Scott Highlands Middle School. In addition to their accomplishments in November 2023, the students competed in the [Minnesota Future City Competition](#) in late January 2024. The students won second place overall and won the "Best Land Surveying

Practices Award," which recognizes the design that employs the best land surveying practices, taking into consideration the high standards used by surveyors to help protect the public's safety and welfare.



Students from Scott Highlands Middle School recently competed in the Minnesota Future City Competition and won second place overall, and the "Best Land Surveying Practices Award." To win this award, they applied the knowledge they gained from participating in activities from the BLM's Cadastral Survey curriculum.

The Future City Competition is a hands-on, cross-curricular educational and competition program that brings science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to life for students in grades 6 through 8. This year's challenge asked students to create a city at least 100 years into the future that is 100 percent electrically powered and keeps their citizens and the environment healthy and safe.

Two teams from the Scott Highlands Middle School competed. Both teams started their season by completing all three activities in the BLM's Cadastral Survey Classroom Investigation (see a previous *BLM Daily* story [here](#)).

"In these lessons, the students learned the history and importance of establishing, recording, and maintaining records of land ownership," said Theresa Back, Future City Competition Coach and Gifted and Talented Coordinator at Scott Highlands Middle School.

For the competition, the students used the information they learned in the BLM's Classroom Investigation to help them lay out their city zones. The lesson on aliquot descriptions gave the students the academic vocabulary to describe how to locate the unique and precise parcels of land.

"They really enjoyed looking up our school property to learn its exact aliquot description and the history of this land ownership," said Back. "Of course, when [Kenneth] Roy (BLM Indian Lands Surveyor) mapped out the course for our students to survey, the students got firsthand experience using the land survey equipment and methods. This was a wonderful team building activity to start our season with, but more importantly, it offered our students an experience that city planners and engineers would need to use to plan and create a city! There was not another team at the competition that had this firsthand experience or knowledge."

The competition consists of two separate contests. First, teams plan and create their "future cities" around the central theme for the year. The Scott Highlands Middle School students researched, wrote essays, presented speeches, built a tabletop model, and submitted a project plan for this part of the competition, for which they received second place overall.

The second part of the Future City Competition entails speaking with engineers and city planners about their specific special awards. Teams were interviewed by nine sets of special award judges, who then decided which team provided the best answers.

According to Back, one of the most challenging special awards is the "Best Land Surveying Practices Award," which is sponsored by the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying. To win this award, teams need to do extensive research about what land surveying is and how it is used.

"We were excited to share our knowledge and especially our firsthand experiences of being 'surveyors for a day' with the judges! We knew we could win this award because of the experiences we had with Mr. Ken Roy and the 'My Public Lands: Classroom Investigation Curriculum.' We were right. We won!" Back exclaimed.

The Future City Competition encourages "young minds to become STEM professionals of the future," in an effort to make the world a better place and build more sustainable, equitable, and diverse cities of the future.

The BLM congratulates the students from Scott Highlands Middle School on this prestigious accomplishment!

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