



Cleaning up: Dirty cars get sparkling clean on site of former automotive business

The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) oversees the cleanup of contaminated land throughout the state. In many cases, the reclaimed property is turned into businesses that produce jobs and tax revenue. Helping “brownfields” turn green is an integral part of DTSC’s mission.

Such was the case in the southern California community of Hawaiian Gardens, where a 2.3-acre vacant site – which at various times was occupied by an automotive business, a restaurant and an office building – was cleaned up and is now home to the Five Star Express Carwash. The property had been vacant since 2005.

Before new owner Ronald Yi, owner of Five Star Synergy, could build on it though, he had to remove legacy contaminants, including petroleum hydrocarbons and other volatile organic compounds. About nine truck-loads of contaminated soil was removed and disposed of in an authorized facility.

DTSC oversaw soil, soil-gas and groundwater investigations, conducted a health risk assessment and approved the plan to remove the contaminated soil. Today, the car wash is getting good reviews from the public, and the city proudly proclaims it a success on its [web site](#).

The project manager, Dr. Nirupma Suryavanshi, says this type of project goes to the heart of DTSC’s mission. “Protecting the environment and public health, and putting land back to productive use is so important,” she said. “This kind of project brings employment and new revenue, as well as an important service to the community.”

Right: Workers prepare to remediate the property in Hawaiian Gardens, vacant since 2005.

Below: A Google Street View of the gleaming new facility.

