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# Using the Zerofootprint Personal Carbon Manager to Engage Communities

Case Study: Green Change Project

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**SUMMARY** → The Jane Finch Community and Family Centre needed a lightweight, scalable solution that would allow them to engage thousands of users on an individual basis while aggregating and tracking their emissions reductions. Zerofootprint was able to leverage its Personal Carbon Manager software and expertise in community engagement and education to deliver a comprehensive program that mobilized a community to make real, positive change in an urban space.

## **BACKGROUND** → ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THE GREEN CHANGE PROJECT

The Green Change project began in April 2008 as a partnership between the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Toronto Community Housing and a number of local non-profits and businesses in the Jane and Finch neighborhood of Toronto. Their mandate was to develop a program to educate and train residents of their community in a variety of fields, from climate science to healthy living and waste management. Recipients of this training were primarily youth & minority groups seeking employment in Toronto's developing Green Economy.

As part of the program, participants were asked to spread the message, to share the information they received in their training and engage their friends and neighbours in a green community that would generate massive reductions in the environmental impact of Jane/Finch residents. The Jane Finch community and Family Centre was faced with the task of quantifying the effect of the program, of tracking the actions of its volunteers, and of creating a persistent community where program participants could communicate, share information and celebrate their successes. The program coordinators were already familiar with the Toronto Personal Carbon Manager (<http://toronto.zerofootprint.net>) and approached Zerofootprint to determine if a creative solution could be reached.

## **SOLUTION** → ADAPTING PROGRAMS TO THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

The Zerofootprint Foundation is active in the Toronto community, particularly in areas of carbon measurement and management, as well as education and community engagement. The Green Change project was a perfect fit for Zerofootprint's capabilities, so a solution was reached via adaptations to the existing Personal Carbon Manager software.

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The needs of the Green Change project can essentially be condensed into the following points:

- 1- Track the total number of overall users from the Jane Finch Green Change project
- 2- Quantify, aggregate and track the carbon footprints and emissions reductions of program participants
- 3- Provide a forum for program participants, agents and staff to discuss and coordinate program activities
- 4- Provide training in the use of the calculator and related tools for "green change agents" to engage their peers
- 5- Provide for the possibility of users lacking in computer literacy, or without access to computers or the internet.

The base functionality of the Personal Carbon Manager was sufficient for points 1-3, as it is a robust platform with built-in social networking functionality. However, points 4 and 5 required some creative thinking.

The Green Change program had a core group of 50 volunteers known as Green Change Agents. Each of these agents received at least 4 hours of hands-on training with the Zerofootprint calculator in a session with Zerofootprint staff. This training covered the concept and function of the calculator itself, as well as a comprehensive walkthrough of its capabilities. Green Change agents were taught about the various tips that they could recommend and how to manage discussions using the calculator forums. The agents were also trained in basic atmospheric science and the rationale behind reducing carbon emissions. Once they were trained, these agents were sent out into the community to spread the word about the program.

To address the issue of limited computer literacy, or limited access to computers or the internet, Zerofootprint developed a specialized hard copy of the calculator for use by the green change agents. These calculator booklets contained all the information necessary for a green change agent to conduct a basic "footprint audit", and make recommendations drawn from the calculator tips section. Using these calculator booklets, volunteers were able to make many audits at once, then log their results in the calculator once they reached a computer.

With this combination of existing software and new adaptations, Zerofootprint was able to effectively address the needs of the Green Change project, resulting in a successful initial year.

**RESULTS** → With the easy-to-use Zerofootprint software and the hard work of program administrators and volunteers, the Green Change program's initial year was a resounding success. In addition to numerous successful community events, from barbecues to urban gardening fairs, the following results were reported using the Zerofootprint Personal Carbon Manager.

- Over 50 volunteers from the Jane/Finch community participated in the program as Green Change Agents
- Over 900 personal footprint audits were conducted using the Zerofootprint Personal Carbon Manager
- Over 2000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> reductions were reported by calculator users
- Jane and Finch now has the lowest reported average footprint of all Toronto neighborhoods.

The Green Change project was presented with a Green Toronto Award by Toronto Mayor David Miller in recognition for its excellent work in the field of Community Projects. Rosemarie Powell, the Executive Director of the Jane Finch centre had this to say about the award: "We are truly honoured to receive this award and would like thank all our partners for their support, the Green Change Agents for their hard work. Together we can accomplish great things!"

Due to the success of the program, and the ability to quantify, track and report this success, the Green Change project has received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to continue its operations for the next three years.

**ABOUT ZEROFOOTPRINT** → Zerofootprint is a socially responsible enterprise whose mission is to apply vertically integrated technology, design, and risk management to the massive reduction of our environmental footprint. Zerofootprint develops Software as a Service based enterprise carbon management solutions for corporations and multinational organizations. For more information, please visit: [www.zerofootprint.net](http://www.zerofootprint.net).

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**MORE  
INFORMATION**

To learn more about the Green Change Project, or to learn how Zerofootprint's software solutions can benefit your community, please contact

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