



West Broadway's Future Emerges

Using a holistic four-pronged approach to community development

“It’s time for all hands on deck,” declared Mike Wynne, executive director of [Emerge](#), describing the hard-fought renaissance of West Broadway in North Minneapolis. And if anyone can leverage enthusiasm, vision, financing, and the sheer will to get it done; it’s Mike Wynne, and the people of Emerge.

Emerge, started in 1995 as the community development arm of Pillsbury United Communities, became independent in 2006 and quickly established a record of developing creative partnerships and enterprises. Located in their renovated landmark building at the corner of Broadway and Emerson Avenues North, Emerge’s new headquarters testify to the success of a collaborative, integrative approach to community development that focuses on people.

With storefronts that stood vacant for 10 years, and upper levels abandoned for 30, other potential investors had walked away from Broadway Avenue. But Emerge saw an opportunity. By leveraging their relationship with the City County Federal Credit Union as tenant and financier, working with the City of Minneapolis and developer Stuart Ackerberg, and making their own financial investment, Emerge built a spacious new office. That building (shown below) now serves as a cornerstone in Broadway’s rebirth, bringing affordable commercial space, banking, retail, dining, and a central gathering spot to this underserved neighborhood.

“We meet people where they are,” said Wynne, “working from the inside out, not the outside in. We are fully integrated into the community, and strive to know first-hand what the real needs are, and then work to offer solutions.”

Emerge focuses on developing people’s potential by connecting disadvantaged individuals with economic opportunities. They work with a network of public and private partners in four related areas —workforce, supportive housing, business ventures, and community development.

Their extensive partner network, their investment in human capital, and their strategic leadership in solving persistent social and economic challenges represent the kind of long-term, comprehensive community development that Twin Cities LISC supports. We call it “building social momentum,” says Wynne. It’s an approach that makes Emerge a



natural fit with Twin Cities LISC's Building Sustainable Communities, and COACTION Fund programs.

"LISC's support has been absolutely critical to our work," said Wynne. "They sit at the table as an advisor, a partner, and an investor. They bring new ideas from their national scope of work, while recognizing there are challenges unique to each neighborhood." Wynne continued, "Their support through the Building Sustainable Communities program, and the COACTION Fund, reinforce the entire scope of our work. We would not be as far along, were it not for our relationship with LISC."

Transforming lives and communities

Emerge's community development programs encourage individuals to help transform their community and their own lives.

For example, their [Workforce](#) program has reached more than 2,000 residents of diverse, distressed communities, and placed more than 1,200 people in jobs. They offer training, placement, and wealth enhancement for community members who face challenges to career success. The workforce program partners with area businesses to determine employment skills and need--now and into the future. Plans are afoot to expand the program by moving more aggressively into green industries, adding training opportunities, and bringing new businesses and jobs to the community.

Another program, [Villages](#), annually serves 180 chronically homeless families in supportive housing. It provides integrated social services, and includes one of the nation's first programs for homeless custodial fathers with children, while also providing housing for women with children.

Emerge's dynamic [Ventures](#) program creates jobs, administering social enterprises and programs that employ more than 500 residents annually in temporary and transitional jobs. The program employs, among others, ex-offenders and at-risk youth, and also provides transportation to job sites.

Right now, Emerge is at the heart of a major capital campaign to renovate the state's oldest standing library, located across the street from its headquarters. The Historic North Branch Library will enjoy a new life as the Emerge Career and Technology Center. Noting the pronounced digital divide on the North Side, Wynne sees tremendous need among residents for greater access to technology education and career advancement.

"We are building a beacon on Emerson and Broadway," claims Wynne. It's a physical example of Emerge's commitment to creating economic opportunity for community members by involving many players. The City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, the McKnight Foundation, Wells Fargo, Twin Cities LISC, and others, are all part of the library project.

By creating new alliances and bringing new funding, projects, and opportunities to the North Side, it's not hard to see a new life ahead for West Broadway ... thanks in part to the holistic development vision of Emerge.



North Branch Library