In Complex Projects, Chicago Studio, the first quarter, we conducted a research/study on the location, regarding different aspects. The urban characteristics such as the typologies, the infrastructures, the density, the uses, the transportation possibilities, and the public space were thoroughly studied in order to grasp the area of intervention.

What is more, the characteristics of the inhabitants were investigated in order to understand the identity of the area.

In short, the Midway area is a suburban area, developed around Midway airport, strangely after its settlement there. The area provided an economical alternative to the loop chosen in an important extend by Irish immigrant families. In the following decades, however, the population changed as the descendants wouldn’t follow the parents’ choice. As a result, a Spanish origin population has moved in the area.

The majority of the residents are working class families with children (0-17 years old). The wish for a private house and garden is undeniable, as it is almost the only typology present. The repetition of similar housing and garage units results in a monotonous urban fabric that lacks a strong character. To that, contributes the fact that the area is mono-functional (almost only residential) resulting in having ghost streets during the day.

The lack of public space is obvious and its disregard in combination with the strong individual character of the residents, have resulted in an unattractive public space. Demonstrative to that is the fact that, often, the garage unit placed adjacent to a park, secluding the residence, and denying any contact with the public space.
In addition to that, the area has a lack of cultural facilities, such as, libraries, cinemas, theaters, museums, cultural centers. Going to the mall seems to be the only recreational alternative for the residents.

The strongest element of the location however is the airport. It is an “alien” element in the urban fabric, denying any contact with the neighborhood, secluding itself with a wall.

Considering my design strategy, Kevin Lynch’s book “The image of the city”, and the episteme of phenomenology helped me identify the problems and opportunities of the area, based on the perception of the residents.

The airport was regarded as an opportunity in order to create a “landmark for the area” and to establish a strong identity. Engaging this peculiar situation instead of denying it was seen as the appropriate strategy.

The research question, therefore, was how to redesign the airport in order to provide a strong identity to the area, reverting the mono-functional character and the lack of public space.
The 2\textsuperscript{nd} stage of the research concerned the airport configuration itself. 

The existing configuration of the public part of the airport is extremely ineffective, denying any contact with the neighborhood, a fact that resulted in an uninspiring and unattractive public space.

However the gates part of the airport has a pier configuration and it works effectively for its size. Therefore, it was considered wise to keep it.

Research question: How to redesign the airport effectively connecting it with the neighborhood.
The starting point for the design was developing the program. Realized and conceptual airport examples, specialized standards and guidelines were used for that purpose. A detailed site analysis, finally, helped me identify the missing elements, the problems and opportunities for the final design. The function of the existing airport, the connections, the relation with the area, the parking space etc. were further analyzed, before starting implementing the program in the site.

Finally, based on the previous steps, the optimal configuration was chosen, based on the existing situation, the complex program requirements, and the form and materialization possibilities that could render this building a landmark for the area. Designing a landmark that could mark the transition between air and land and has a strong cultural meaning was an initial intention.

An interesting finding from the research was that there is a lack of cultural facilities for the area and place for the young people of the area. What is more, the majority of the schools seem to be failing.

Therefore, the airport – landmark could host certain cultural uses that could be experienced by both passengers and residents of the area.

Regarding the wider social context, I believe that a building like this would have a significant positive impact for the area. The educational and recreational value for the young people of the area (children and parents), would be significant. What is more, the additional job opportunities the new airport can provide, as well as the redevelopment of the area around it that could evolve into a retail and recreation hub, could have an important economic impact.

The research question of that step was how to combine the cultural component in an airport terminal in order to upgrade passengers’ experience and contribute to the area.
The U.S aviation industry is a $190 billion euro industry; however 6.5% of people— including me, suffer from aviophobia resulting in a significant target market unavailable.

Therefore, I studied the ways airport design can result in fighting flight stress and I used them as tools for my design (view, light, materials, green, orientation, etc).

Research Question: How architectural design can fight flight stress.

The methodology I used and the Research Questions to which my project “answers” resulted from an understanding of the different layers of the urban fabric, looking at different scales and different aspects of the case study, which was the methodology suggested at the studio. Each step of my design answers a research question. People’s perception and the “feeling” of space were also a very important for my design. Urban context, social, context, economical context, infrastructural context were all of equal importance in order to develop the project.