The last month before P5 represents a good opportunity to take the last overview on the whole progress of the project. With half a year on the research and half a year on the design, the project appears from a vacant land in South Chicago and then turns into a mature architecture design. The significance behind the project is going to explore a way to deal with an area surrounding by terrible situation. The main reason that why South Chicago becomes now is unemployment. It then brings in further social problems as violence, crime, health crisis and low education, etc. Our group develops the future strategy based on the policy of Chicago government and the current neighborhood condition around the site. Health City-as both aim and slogan, becomes a new anchor to re-develop the vacant land of US Steel company and helps to speed up the improvement of employment and economic growth.

Further on, the individual design represents the combination of program and architecture. Through the previous general research and the group strategy, the individual design gains its function, system, dimension. With the begining of the program, the project develops further on architecture qualities. The site has significant element-the giant ore walls, which becomes a startpoint to build my imagination on architectural space. To find a strong connection between the site and the building is my main aim and finally it is achieved.

Aspect 1
The relationship between research and design

Without the research, the design does not exist at all.

The importance of research is strengthened again after my P4 presentation because when preparing my P5, I list systematically all related documents of my graduation project. I organize the whole storyline of the studio and I realized that my previous research contributed a lot to the design. The conclusion and information in research will still help to develop architectural design even in details.

When Southworks belonged to the US Steel company, it is a strong anchor, radiating its surrounding neighborhoods from traffic, culture, employment, etc. Accompanied by the bankrupt of the factory, all houses on this land were demolished. Thousands of workers were unemployed and nowadays the land is totally vacant, leaving only four huge ore walls, represents its past and waiting to witness the future. In old times the ore walls were used to ship in goods. Now it is the unique heritage of the history.

Our group combine the research on the policy from Chicago government and the specific situation of southworks together to develop our own strategy. In August 16, 2011 the government established the Chicago public health agenda to achieve the Healthy Chicago goal. This policy is a continuous project with stable investment that several related projects in small scales has been put into practice. In the following years, the policy needs a place to build a strong and centralized public health base, which is the top-down strategy in our site.

Based on the research, our group established the Health City strategy and define the components of the so called Health city, including environment, food supplyment, healthcare, research, business, employment, etc. In the general urban design of Southworks, we divide the site into two parts-the health research campus and the health life community. The central health campus is the core of the whole strategy and it is also the first stage of future development.

My individual architecture design is based on the previous research and the group strategy. In the definition of health city, one element is sports space that the Southworks needs to establish its own health related facility. Physical fitness is the basic factor to achieve any other goal. Sports is always the best way to exercise the body. We encourage people to play any sports items at their convenience. The surrounding neighborhoods are also welcomed to join the building because there are not enough facilities in this whole area. A sports complex is needed based on the group strategy.
Aspect 2

The relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

Complex is the theme of the studio. Complex means to find a balance in the chaos site conditions and result in a combination which organizes everything quite well. In the site of Chicago southworks, the place does need an anchor to activate the whole area because it has been sleeping for years.

The studio begins with half a year research on Chicago Southworks. The research results in the books from large to small perspectives, which provide us with abundant background knowledge of South Chicago. The site has its own history, but now it turns into a vacant land, which is caused by the decline of US Steel company. The bankrupt is also the main reason of unemployment that Chicago southworks is eager to return to its peak period. The research lead the whole studio to study the past and imagine the future of the site based on the subjective conditions of South Chicago.

Under the framwork of research, everyone in the studio has his own future version, which becomes the reason to form groups with different logic. We gather together to explore the possibility to build a campus system on the site. During the lecture in Depaul University, we learned that a campus is almost the gurantee to develop an area, even in a bad neighborhood like Depaul in years ago. But now it is one of the best neighborhood in Chicago. As a good redevelopment reference, Chicago Southworks can also learn a lot from the logic of a complex and intercorrected campus. 

The most significant characteristics of the site is the huge and long ore walls. After the general research, some groups demolish the ore walls in their proposal, but our group decide to keep them. The walls are the heritage of the past US steel company and now the factory has gone but left them alone on the site. Same as my group members, my project is also lying in the ore walls. We all agree to keep the heritage because the walls has witnessed the past, it has right to witness the future also. On the other hand, the walls are excellent elements to develop our imagination on creating space based on the walls. It seems easier to design space in a site with several elements on it instead of a bare land.

Based on the group Health City strategy, my project is a sports complex, coming from the definition of the health city. Physical fitness is needed by everyone. The project is not only a container of sports facilities, but also a place to offering children and disabled people enough space to train their body and enjoy it. Sports related issues as sports retailing and healthy diet restaurant is also inside of the building. Indoor basketball, swimming pool and fitness center is the three main functions of the project because these facilities are popular in Chicago but in shortage of southworks area.

From architectural perspective, the project also creates some interesting space within the site, especially with the ore walls. The sports complex is in the first stage of our strategy and will become a nice place to absorb people and improve their physical fitness to achieve the health city goal.
Aspect 3
The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework

Step by step is the essential method to develop the whole project, from typology case studies to the group urban design, from the large and general site analysis to the group strategy, then into the individual architecture design and result in 1:5 details. Spending half of a year on the research of the project is very helpful. Only go deep into the project itself from several perspectives, we have a better understanding of the situation we are facing. From large to small scales provides a reasonable line to avoid jumping too fast.

No architecture can exist without the site, especially in those places with significant characteristics on the land. The central area of Chicago southworks is located between the walls. The ore walls are 8m high and 700m long, which looks like a big challenge to handle with. But on the other hand, it also provides many possibilities of interesting space. Sketches, models are helpful to develop the building itself. When go deep into the project, details are needed to work better. 1:200, 1:100, 1:50, 1:20 and finally 1:5, the developing progress is still step by step from large to small, from general to detailed.

Sketch and physical model are much more helpful than laptop to develop architectural qualities, especially in the beginning of the design process. Accompanied by the models, I can feel and modify the space conveniently and have a better discussion with the mentor. It is always the best way to create the spatial qualities inside the building.

Aspect 4
The relationship between the project and the wider social context

Chicago southworks was a well developed factory before, but after its decadence, the large site became a vacant land, waiting for new exploring and investment. If a strong anchor can not be placed in this area, the south Chicago will still be suffering in the current situation. Similar issues happen everywhere in the world. If the Chicago southworks successfully bring the area back to the right track, it will become a nice reference project. Since SOM has designed the whole area, the southworks is waiting for development. This will take years, but time will finally prove whether the strategy succeed or not.

The society is stepping fast, but sometimes it is going too fast to handle the left part. Chicago southworks is a good reference. It became vacant in 1994 with all the houses demolished at that time, but after 20 years it finally waits a new development strategy. Without the punch from a complex project, the surroundings are still staying in the terrible status. Chicago southworks was shining before, but decadence made the place fall in to terrible situation. Such kind of issues also happen a lot in developing country. Unemployment, crime, health and education problems are accompanied by the bad condition of local economic.

The complex graduation studio helps to develop feasible proposals to apply in vacant area, and also helps to train the research and design ability. Based lots of analysis and following a complete schedule line, the project finally hatches.