Midway Convention Center

“Business and Cultural Landmark”

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In blue: Project’s site: Midway Airport. In red: Chicago’s Loop.

**Relationship between theme of studio and my project.**

The Complex Projects graduation studio area of investigation is located in Chicago, specifically in Midway Airport. As any other big metropolis, Chicago suffers from the mono centrality focused on the Loop, in where the main economical activities of the city take place mobilizing massive number of people to this area. This creates an unbalanced growth in where the Loop is the center of all the infrastructure, services, as well as real state, leaving aside the rest of the city creating marginal neighborhoods with poor infrastructure. The farthest you go from this main node, the worsening of the conditions. In addition, Chicago has suffered since 2007 from the economical crisis together with the drop of the car and steel industries in the area. This has caused many lost of jobs, vacancy of houses, less investment in education, which produce segregation and a decay of the society. In fact, some people started to leave Chicago and the Midwest in search for a better life, however this city has the potential not only to engage back in his economy but also to become an example for many other cities in the USA. The aim of the studio is to find a solution to solve some of these problems and bring back Chicago as one of the best metropolis in the World.
Our graduation theme is focused on Midway Airport area, which at the moment is a chaotic place due to the existing airport is inserted on a residential area, becoming an isolated space from the neighborhood with not supporting facilities to integrate them.

The studio research was divided in two parts. The first one is based on a development of a master plan that will tackle the main problems of the area, and the second part is my personal project which not only compliment the master plan but also gives punctual solutions to attract investment in the area by hosting the meetings and conferences for the potential investors traveling to Midway Airport.

First of all, the main conclusion from the research conducted on the site, was the creation of hub as the catalyst for this area. In fact this new platform would become the new business and entertainment center not only for the neighborhood but also for Chicago itself. Taking advantage of the airport; the orange city-train line, together with the incorporation of the high speed train and the lime city-train line makes this site a new economic Hub for Chicago. The idea is to make this platform a “business cluster” that attract investors to Chicago as well as host the offices headquarters of many industry manufacturers around the area. Furthermore, offices, convention center, and public spaces will convert this area in public-private encountering area, reducing the segregation of the neighborhoods as well as providing jobs for the neighborhood.

This platform cluster would bring a lot of supporting program to the neighborhood as well as the airport, which at the end would bring back the economic flourish of the zone, together with better public and private spaces for the people in the area.

Diagram showing the local, regional and global connection of Midway Airport, and therefore its potential to become a “Business Hub”
**Relationship between research and design.**

The relationship between research and design is intrinsically linked since the beginning of the semester in where the city was dissected in different layers and scales in order to understand the problematic of Chicago and proposed possible solutions to those aspects. In fact, those problems were inspected in the site visit to Chicago and specifically in Midway Airport surroundings, in where the lack of architectural and urban qualities were highly noted. In addition, the deteriorating situation of the area, combined with the lack of job opportunities were the main aspect that suggested the incorporation of a Convention Center in the area as a possible investment asset to improve the economy of the area. This combined with the program suggested in the master plan become an integral intervention that take advantage of the opportunities that Midway Airport represents creating a new Hub for the Area. The research therefore was focused on the building itself, focusing on the program and main aspect present on a Convention Center. In fact, I studied previous convention centers in USA, Switzerland, and Iceland in order to understand the size and the optimal program areas to include in my project, this also included the different design possibilities from where I would determine the most suitable for my Convention Center that combined with my concept will be the result of this constant dialogue between research and design.

In fact, the idea of creating a landmark for Midway airport is explored through a Convention Center which not only become a reference point for the area but the generator of business possibilities for the locals, by attracting people from the surrounding neighborhoods, counties and regions of USA as well as international investors who arrived in Midway Airport and can attend conferences at this place. This Convention Center will become the exposition platform for local start ups, displaying their work daily at this venue. The concept starts by this glass LED box that becomes a big public screen. In fact, poetry messages as well as art paintings can be displayed here as this Big Cultural billboard for the neighborhood. In addition, projects developed in the surrounding steam work facilities can be constantly displayed in the facade so investors and travelers will be attracted. Actually, even while they are landing in Midway Airport they will see the big screen displayed messages and therefore direct themselves to the Convention Center, generating business by becoming sponsors or just buying products in the fairs. On the other hand, the spatial composition is based on focusing the attention of people at the exposition in the first floors, by enclosing the main circulation towards the atrium in the middle. In contrast, while you start going to the auditorium and the ballroom the circulation is moved to the sides becoming the building as a watchtower towards the neighborhood, the airport and the city of Chicago (Loop) as the background. The project finishes with the view of Chicago as the main big window in the ballroom.

As a result the building program and design strategies could not have been formulated in the way they have been without the important research carried through the year.
Relationship between methodical line of approach of the studio and my personal methodological approach.

This Convention Center is the result of constant dialogue between research conducted during the first semester and design strategies explored during the second semester. In fact, the conclusions from the research of the first semester were synthetized and became the starting point of the project design, attacking specific problems found in the process. Precisely, the building not only becomes a possible answer to those questions but also an interesting result merging the different strategies used in the process. The final result of the building responds to the different explorations and feedback acquired from the design, structural, climate and building technology tutors. The process of conceptual design started by analyzing similar projects, translating the basic program into spaces and evaluating which spaces my Convention Center would require. Then different spatial scenarios were explored looking for optimal circulation and memorable spaces. Structure and Climate concepts were also analyzed and included always searching for a sustainable answer that responds to the site, the building requirements and at the end people of Chicago.

Relationship between the project and the wider social context.

The urban strategy developed in this project is focused within the boundaries of Chicago, but since the monocentrality is a common and recurrent problem that affects many cities not only in USA but also in the world, this strategy can become a case study to be incorporated in any other cities. In fact, through implementation of a business hub platform the aim is to become this area a job generator hub triggering the affluence of investments to here. Part of this goal is achieved though the Convention Center which host the meeting rooms and spaces required for conducting business. One of the main aspect of this convention center is the flexibility of spaces that can easily adapt to the different requirements of the users. Furthermore, the sustainable strategies applied in the project are a responsible approach within the new climate changes in the world, which are highly relevant nowadays. Finally the media façade of my project can become a trend in a new responsible architecture, which activate public spaces through the interactive cultural billboards while keeping a nice esthetic overview of the building. As conclusion, this project not only generate value for the site and the residents of Chicago but can also become a reference for other similar architecture projects which can use the ideas explored in this master plan and Convention Center as base for their explorations and solutions.