Introduction
The project for this studio is located in Chicago Illinois. The area is the neighborhood of Pilsen, situated alongside the South Branch Chicago River. Pilsen is divided into two areas. The first being a vibrant residential area of predominantly Mexican descent. The second being one of the Planned Manufacturing Districts (PMD), otherwise known as the Industrial Corridor.

The goal of these Planned Manufacturing Districts was to protect areas within the city from being used by anything other than industry, in order to keep the industry, and thus employment, within the city of Chicago. However, as times changed, so did the industry. Modes of transportation, the behavior and needs of residences and the role society’s play on the world stage have all changed, and continue to change towards the future. This means we have to renew our view on these districts and re-invent the American city.

The relationship between research and design.
There has been a clear perception within the governmental bodies of the city that for Chicago to be great again, it needs to revert back to its industrial ways during the heydays. The municipality has done whatever it can to conserve its industry, allowing dirty industries to reside within the city limits, with favorable conditions, both spatial as financial. However, this policy is already showing its cracks and holes as change is inevitable. As policies fail both the public and industries are relentless and enforce the city to evolve. It is research that allows us to see through these perceptions, into reality.

The reality is that some changes made almost fifty years ago are irreversible, despite numerous attempts and efforts by governmental bodies to counter these changes. The problem does not however lie with these changes, but by the reluctance to see these changes as opportunities, other than liabilities. Change is naturally feared in society, but it is this very change that allows a society to grow stronger. The reason change is feared, is because it creates insecurities for the future. It is research that offers the security needed for a society to evolve, making it the foundation for an urban and architectural design. It offers architects and urbanists the tools to recognize strengths and potentials as well as identify its weaknesses, in order to envision a different future.

In the case of Pilsen, Chicago, research taught us the directions different sectors are moving towards. Research into industry has shown us that there is a new industry on the rise. This industry is predominantly small scale and clean, and is directed towards service and customization. This new industry is no longer bound to large specialized facilities. It is flexible and can flourish anywhere in and around the city.

These changes in industry reflect on the educational system as this new type of industry requires a new type of workforce. One that is familiar with high-tech equipment and has learned a proper work-ethnic early on in life. This means work-place simulation is more important now than ever. Making it necessary to transform traditional classrooms into high-tech training facilities. But it also means
making knowledge more accessible to people and offering flexible spaces for the public to educate themselves within the public realm, outside of school environments. Lastly, research has shown us that the new city needs to offer both the accessibility to services of urban living, as well as the peaceful nature of rural living, all within walking distance. It relies on clean technologies to offer the solutions for the future.

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

The theme of this studio is the relationship between Living, Working and Manufacturing in a new context. A context where these disciplines are all the more integrated with each other. In our Masterplan we have chosen to embrace changes by looking at new models for Living, Working and Manufacturing. This new city model consists of concentrated clusters to offer close relations with nature, while providing urban accommodations and flexible workspaces, where the public can both be consumers, educators and producers of their realm. The landscape is of a productive nature in order for it to be sustainable economically as well. It offers spaces that favor clean small scale industries and the facilities to educate a new workforce, familiar with the latest technological advances. The public spaces become tools of education, offering the public information while cultivating new behavior.
The graduation project for this studio consist of a new type of market place. Its location has been strategically chosen as one of the catalyst to transform the industrial corridor of Pilsen from a polluted industrial park in to a new urban living and manufacturing district, where the South Branch Chicago River once again takes on a central role in the lives of the residents of Pilsen. The projects location addresses multiple issues. Being on the border of Pilsen (Chicago) it acts as a gate to an otherwise secluded neighborhood. But its central location, in between a diversity of neighborhoods and high accessibility also allows it to act as a place of gathering, bridging the gap between communities and connecting the public to the river. The market place is combined with urban farming, creating a new standard for farming, where fresh produce is being cultivated and sold within the city limits. But also with a culinary school, to bring the process of education, production and consumption closer together. And last but not least, being located underneath the Dan Ryan Expressway Bridge, a highway elevation, that crosses the South Branch Chicago River, in between several characteristic industrial buildings, this project embodies the new spirit of re-using and transforming an otherwise neglected space into prime real estate.

The relationship between the project and the wider social context
One of Chicago’s strengths is in the diversity of people that make up the city. Each identity is clearly visible, and each have their own place within the city. They live side by side, like cities of their own, bounded only by mutual interests. It’s these mutual interests that brings them together, and it is in these mutual interests where the opportunities lie for this project.

In the past this mutual interest was the strength of Chicago’s industry. Chicago was an industrial superpower on the world stage, and this history left its marks all over the city. As the fog of industry has slowly faded away, it left behind remnants of this time. Remnants like a large network of infrastructure, and industrial buildings with character. But the city is at a crossroad on the tracks of time. In the past 20 years it tried to revitalize its rich history in the same way as in its early history, but the zeitgeist has changed and the city continues to crumble. These remnants of a great history are in danger of becoming a burden rather than an advantage. In order to steer away from a similar fate as that of a fallen city, like Detroit, a new approach is needed.

Other examples in architecture has shown us how heritage can be transformed from a burden to an opportunity by seeing these potentials in a new light. As the world changes, so does the United States of America. Dirty industry and man are no longer intertwined, and the inner city is set free of these shackles. The large companies are slowly being shunned to the edges of the city and these lost buildings are now being appreciated for a different reason, its architecture. A new city dweller takes its place. One that is both consumer, educator and producer. This new city dweller has a need for easy access to new technologies, in order to be self-sustainable. It prefers to re-use rather than to discard, and it favors health of itself, as well as its environment, over materialism and comfort. It is our job as architects and city planners to not only meet these new requirements, but to do so while protecting the most precious gift this city has to offer, its heritage. This means transforming its architecture for new purposes, while allowing it to be adaptable for future changes in both use and behavior. This is the new reality for architecture, where form no longer follows function, but function follows form instead.
The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework

The complexity that’s being addressed in this studio, is one with many layers on multiple scales. The large numbers of parties involved, each with their own issues and each issue affecting the others as well, forces the designer to dive in the deep, while maintaining an overview. This makes the assignment of designing a city highly complex, as the designer needs to take on many different roles. The methodology practiced by this studio is a step by step approach, coupled with large amounts of research. This research offers a framework wherein the designer is allowed to work freely. The better the research, the more detailed and precise the framework is defined, the better the result will be.

As I moved on throughout the design process, this project shaped itself like clay, only guided towards a common goal without really knowing the end result. Each piece of input, derived from the research, and each design element, being treated as a scientific case study, slowly pounded the design into its final shape. The Design Studio offered me the opportunity to generate this framework, therefore making this project the result of gathered information and analyses.

Figure 5 – Axonometric of the design, insert = full assemblage