A central question of this studio is what role does architecture have in the creation of revitalized urban areas. Subsets of this question include issues regarding the definition of urbanism, the public role of program in an urban environment, and the internal and external development of architecture.

This studio will be focusing on the ‘North Downtown’ area of Salem along the waterfront. This historically industrial area is at a critical location in the city as it borders Salem’s downtown, a recently rejuvenated riverfront to the south, and residential neighborhoods to the north. The city is hoping to transform this currently underutilized area into a more vibrant, active part of the city.

The studio will start with urban design work in collaboration with the city and courses in PPPM for the first few weeks of the term and will then pick key sites to develop specific architectural projects. The programs for these projects will be developed collaboratively with students, Salem city staff, and local developers and architectural professionals. The studio will have a strong emphasis on translating conceptual ideas into architecture and the process by which that occurs. The intention is to have all students spend most of the second term working on design development and tectonics.

This studio is part of the 2010-2011 Sustainable Cities Year (SCY) run by the Sustainable Cities Initiative (SCI). Salem is the partner city for SCY-2010/11 and this studio will be one of over 25 projects working with Salem. SCI represents a multidisciplinary research, policy and teaching effort to comprehensively address a range of issues related to urban environmental, economic and social health.