

## Methodology:

Through the identification of the 'initial phase change' as the probable governor of change within the system of vacancy, three idealized types of vacant parcels are identified as key conditions within the city of Buffalo (Figure 1). The first type is a recent foreclosure, marking the beginning of the vacancy process. The second type of idealized site is a site that has been vacated 1-2 years, marking the midpoint of the vacancy transition process. The third site is one that has been demolished within the last 4 years, marking the end of the initial phase change. In the city of Buffalo, this process takes 5-7 years from the start of the foreclosure process to demolition by the city. This process results in a vacant lot that is usually preceded by a decaying structure. Often the demolition is seen as an improvement in the neighborhood, and it arguably is because of the buildup of disdain for the perceived disorder and consequential uptick in local crime rates. However with further investigation and design, these sites have the potential to turn from negatives in our urban spaces, to urban assets that respond to their context such as productive structures and lots, ecologically positive spaces for increased carbon sequestration and water infiltration, or open social spaces that work to foster stronger social cohesion.

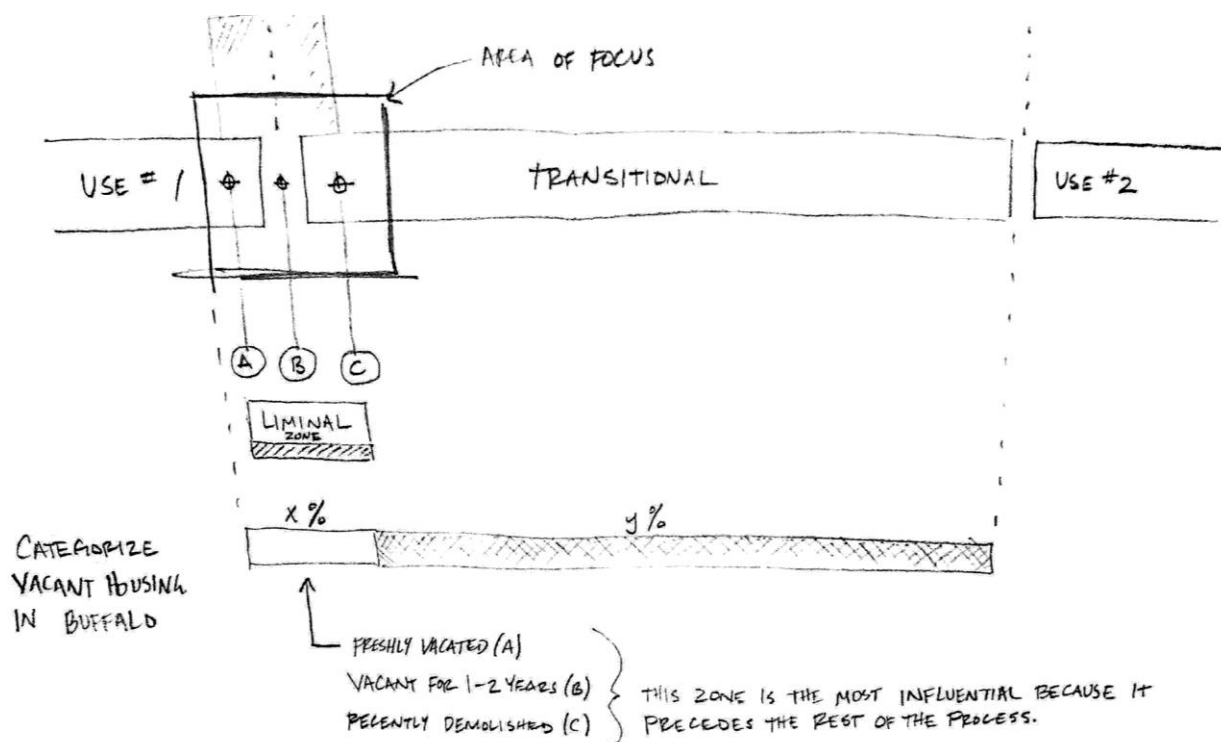


Figure 1: *Vacancy Typologies* - Sketch by Author

These emblematic sites were further investigated through a process of empirical and qualitative research to identify actors, catalysts, points of risk, and potential for intervention. An in-depth flow diagram based on this research shows where the vacancies in Buffalo originate from and where they are most likely to go (Figure 2). The diagram breaks initial catalysts that start the process of vacancy. Foreclosure, including tax foreclosure, makes up the majority of the vacancy in Buffalo. Additional catalysts factored into the chart include fire and environmental catalysts such as wind, snow, and flooding. Environmental catalysts and residential fires represent the possibility for an immediate vacancy, while the homes in foreclosure typically take a period of a few years to go through the process as stated earlier.

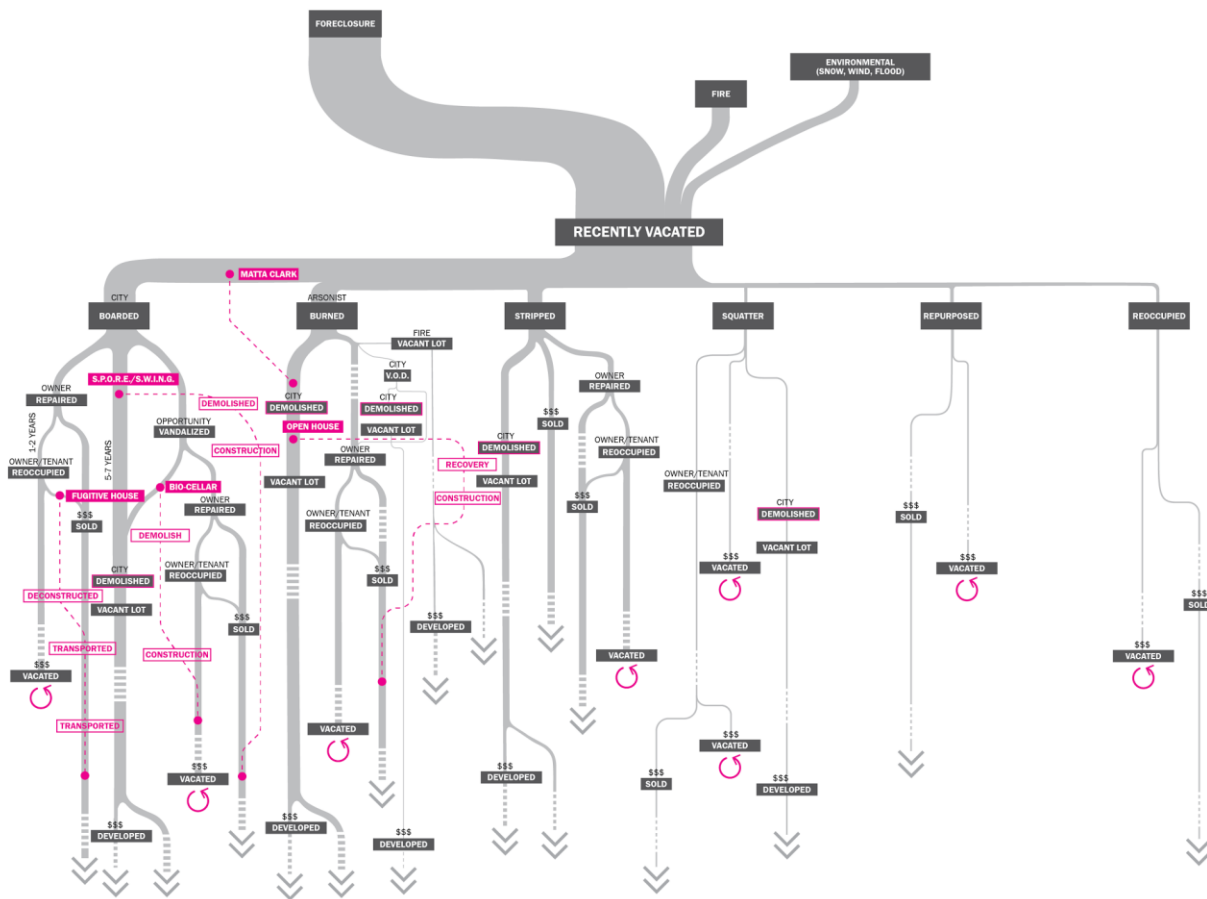


Figure 2: *Vacancy Actors* - Graphic by Author

Three real world sites were then selected for further research as prime manifestations of the aspects characterized in the idealized sites. Each site was evaluated against the vacancy actor analysis done earlier in the process as a way to visualize the path the sites have taken. Plotting the site on the chart also worked to identify a strategic intervention point that would be the most influential based on precedent analysis as well as a comprehensive look at the larger scale urban context of the site. This process allows for the critical components

of the site at the site, block, and neighborhood scales to be identified and begin to point towards specific design interventions are targeted at the critical liminal state contained within the initial phase change.

The interventions to be designed in the next phase of the thesis will be highly specific to the site and neighborhood that they are contained within. They will consider the variables and potential needs among other factors to address the critical inception point of vacancy specific to the site. Parts of the process may be translatable to other urban areas, however due to the highly contextual nature of the designs, they themselves will likely not be directly translatable to other urban areas or even other sites within the city of Buffalo.

*(The strategic temporal nature of the interventions will allow them to have the ability to quickly react to changes in population, climate, and technology.)*