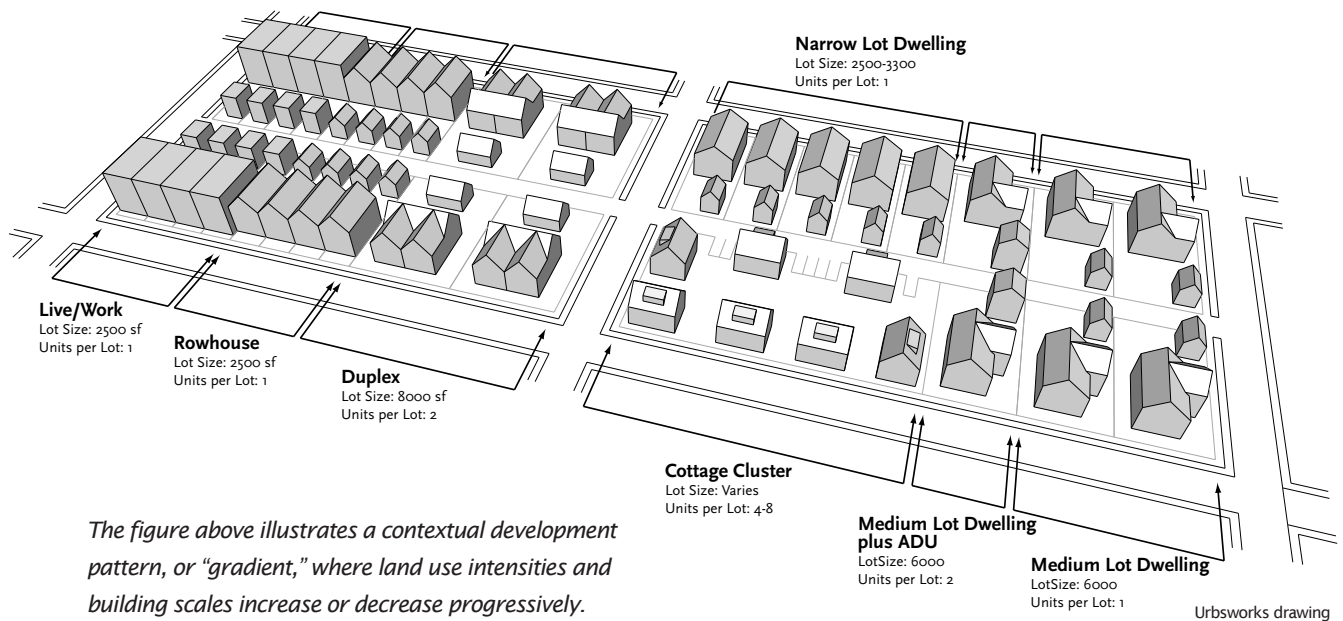**What is contextual infill housing?**

In single dwelling neighborhoods, *it would be development types that may or may not have a higher residential density and yet are compatible with detached single dwelling residential development; development types that provide a range of dwelling types within the context of single dwelling neighborhoods.*

In multidwelling neighborhoods, *it would be development types that meet residential densities but provides a wider range of housing types than are normally found in multidwelling zones, including types that are rented, owned or co-owned. Contextual infill housing in multi-dwelling zones would also allow, or possibly require, a more gradual transition in scale toward adjacent single dwelling zones.*

What ensures that infill is compatible with existing neighborhoods?

It's usually about transitions   One principle might be: where possible, avoid abrupt changes in scale and density between residential and non-residential areas and between residential areas of different densities. To promote compatibility and gradual transitions between land uses, zoning district boundaries are sometimes placed at the back of lots, instead of along the centerline of streets. Such an approach encourages buildings on that are similar in scale and appearance on the street, while a gradual transition of scale and density (along with architectural design for privacy) ensures compatibility at the back of the lot.

A contextual development pattern is one of a "gradient," where land use intensities and building scales increase or decrease progressively. It is unusual and generally undesirable to place development of substantially different scales and intensities side by side. The distance between buildings and districts of differing scale can be relatively close, however. For example, commercial districts can be within just a few blocks of lower-scale residential areas. In some instances a single block or even a single project may include several "gradients" of building scales. For these relationships to have a positive impact, transitions between different building scales need to be carefully considered and designed. While zoning can define the land use and building scale gradient through progressively intensified land use zones, additional tools are needed to add further refinement and variations to the building scale gradient that can respond to specific context issues and conditions.

Narrow Lot Dwelling
Lot Size: 2500-3300
Units per Lot: 1

Live/Work
Lot Size: 2500 sf
Units per Lot: 1

Rowhouse
Lot Size: 2500 sf
Units per Lot: 1

Duplex
Lot Size: 8000 sf
Units per Lot: 2

Cottage Cluster
Lot Size: Varies
Units per Lot: 4-8

Medium Lot Dwelling plus ADU
LotSize: 6000
Units per Lot: 2

Medium Lot Dwelling
LotSize: 6000
Units per Lot: 1

Urbsworks drawing

The figure above illustrates a contextual development pattern, or "gradient," where land use intensities and building scales increase or decrease progressively.

It's also about scale   Another principle might be: Maintain the scale and character of the existing neighborhood. Avoid land uses that are overwhelming and unacceptable due to their size and scale.

Yards and setbacks usually can address compatibility at the scale of individual properties, however, when across the street from higher density or commercial zones, the use of residentially-oriented setbacks may be at odds with taller, street fronting facades and desired massing of neighboring multi-dwelling or commercial buildings. A contextual approach would apply setbacks designed to ensure compatibility with adjacent lower-intensity uses only where the uses are directly adjacent to each other. New projects should fit the character of their surroundings on all sides, while still being sensitive to the adjacent lower-intensity uses.

This does not mean setbacks and building forms need to be identical to existing adjacent properties to be compatible. For example, townhouses adjacent to single dwelling homes can be compatible even though they are two different building types with different setbacks, heights, and densities. Using a combination of yards, setbacks, stepbacks (when upper floors "step back" from the edge of the floor below), and facade design, the transition between different uses and building types can appear to be gradual, so that different uses and building types can be compatible neighbors without adopting identical building forms.

It's also about building design and orientation   A third principle might be: design and arrange new multidwelling buildings, including entries and outdoor spaces, so that each unit has a clear relationship to a public street. Design buildings to revitalize streets and public spaces and to enhance a sense of community and personal safety. Provide an ordered variety of entries, porches, windows, bays and balconies along streets where it is consistent with neighborhood character; avoid blank or solid walls at street level, and include human-scale details and massing

Architectural details and character are also important for reinforcing a relationship to the surrounding context. Entries, porches, windows, bays, and balconies are all important for creating a relationship with the street and increasing compatibility with existing buildings. Even while the materials or architectural style of new infill may be very different from that of existing buildings, architectural details can ensure compatibility. A new infill building, for example, can align with or adopt similar spacing for details such as cornices, roof lines and projections (such as porches). Regulations can require that new buildings have entries facing the street, and have patterns of entries, windows, and porches that are consistent with neighboring buildings.

Consideration should be given to ensuring that privacy is maintained and created both for the residents of existing uses as well as the users of new projects. Windows and balconies should be carefully placed to avoid or minimize impacting the privacy of existing buildings. Landscaping can be designed to add additional privacy over both the short and long-term.