

# **BUILDING STABLE GROUND:** An Evaluation Report



**OCTOBER 2019**  
NuLawLab

# **BUILDING STABLE GROUND:**

## **An Evaluation Report**



*October 2019*

### **Author**

Danya Sherman

### **Additional Research, Analysis, and Writing**

Chelsea Bruck

### **Commissioned By**

NuLawLab, Northeastern University School of Law

### **Photography**

Hakim Raquib

### **Graphic Design**

Alexander A. Nally, JD/MS '20

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Dorchester Not for Sale Community Dinners

**Stable Ground brought together...**

- The City of Boston;
- Artists;
- Community-based organizations;
- Legal experts;
- Trauma experts

**The program...**

- Produced art;
- Supported community events;
- Exposed law students and experts to community-based creative organizing;
- Convened a unique set of partners

**In order to...**

- » Inform and impact the City of Boston’s housing policy to be more trauma-informed;
- » Support community-based cultural organizing around affordable housing in Dorchester;
- » Learn how to support a lawyer’s approach to working with and alongside impacted communities

**Which resulted in...**

- » Stronger trauma-informed housing advocacy;
- » Healing for those experiencing displacement;
- » Increasing the urgent call for policy change

**SUMMARY**

Stable Ground is an innovative program housed at the Northeastern University School of Law (NUSL) that ran for over one year beginning in late 2017.

*“I’ve been involved in a lot of resident-led, anti-gentrification organizing, and am a socially engaged artist as part of that work. Not a lot of art grants are very political, and integrated with things that are relevant. I was excited to do something that could support the organizing work I was already doing.”*

**INTRODUCTION**

From late 2017 through early 2019 the NuLawLab, an innovation team based at the Northeastern University School of Law, began a unique program that brought together legal students and experts, artists, community-based housing justice organizations, trauma specialists, and the City of Boston’s new department focused on anti-housing displacement efforts, the Office of Housing Stability (OHS).

While communities have been using creative and cultural approaches to organize and demand tangible change for centuries, the recent proliferation of self-titled creative community development / creative placemaking work often does not focus on policy or systems-level impact. Projects tend to focus on the production of artistic work, the creation of tangible place-level impacts (such as affordable housing, or increased investment in historically and structurally disinvested neighborhoods), or relationship and community-building and strengthening.

Given these trends, the Stable Ground program was unique in several ways. First, it directly supported the leadership of artists that were from or already embedded in the communities they wished to serve, and who approached the work from a community and cultural organizing perspective. The support was intended to fund work that was already in motion and in process with communities directly impacted by displacement, rather than require artists or community to create a new project. The program was also unique in that it intended to impact internal change at the City of Boston through direct partnership with one of its offices. The program is the only one I am aware of that is based at a law school, approaching arts and housing work from the valuable perspective of its legal implications. Lastly, the program focused on understanding and calling attention to the human impact of the housing crisis – and its traumatic impacts – as opposed to the traditional focus on statistics, real estate, and units.

**NGOC-TRAN VU**  
**ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE**

**PROGRAM GOALS**

NuLawLab’s staff stated that the goals of the program were to:

- (1) *Impact the City of Boston’s housing policy to be more trauma-informed;*
- (2) *Support community-based cultural organizing around affordable housing in Dorchester; and*
- (3) *Learn how to support a lawyer’s approach to working alongside impacted communities.*



## EVALUATION METHODS AND PROCESS

### DATA COLLECTION

Data collected from these activities include the below.

- (1) Notes from participation in above activities (over 50 hours)
- (2) Notes and transcripts from over 20 one-on-one interviews conducted (over 30 hours)
- (3) Review of notes from additional activities not attended
- (4) Survey results from 17 respondents
- (5) Literature review to inform analysis

I began working as an evaluator with Stable Ground in January 2017, which allowed me to become embedded in the project and fully understand its intricacies. In the first phase of the evaluation, I worked on understanding the project's goals and establishing relationships with key players and participants. Activities included participation in kickoff dinner and other initial activities, one-on-one conversations with law students, Artists in Residence, NuLawLab staff, Office of Housing Stability Staff, and the team at Violence Transformed to understand their goals for the work.

During the spring and summer, I attended and observed core project activities including team meetings, City Life / Vida Urbana's 45th Anniversary Celebration, the Dorchester Day Parade, and Stable Ground's Block Party. I also conducted mid-project conversations with stakeholders above.

In the final phase of evaluation after core activities had completed, I conducted final conversations with all stakeholders (including two additional staff at the Office of Housing Stability), transcribed and analyzed notes and recordings, and observed the final roundtable conversation with participants at Northeastern University. I also sent out a survey to project participants and conducted follow-up conversations based on survey responses. Chelsea Bruck worked to analyze the qualitative data, extrapolate key trends, and help with writing and editing. Finally, I drafted this report and asked for review by core project stakeholders to ensure validity.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND TIMELINE

Stable Ground included a wide array of activities. The program's core areas of work emerged organically through ongoing conversation between Dan Jackson (Executive Director) and Jules Sievert (Creative Director) at the NuLawLab, the artists Ngoc-Tran Vu, L'Merchie Frazier, and Anna Myer, Mary Harvey and Barbara Hamm at Violence Transformed, and Margo Lindauer at the Domestic Violence Institute at Northeastern University School of Law. The project's emergent style allowed partnerships to develop at the pace of trust, and activities to take shape according to participant and community desires and needs. The three core areas included artist residencies with grassroots organizations, partnership with the City of Boston, and legal innovation work led by Northeastern law students.

### CORE ELEMENTS

#### PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY OF BOSTON

- ▶ Participation in Office of Housing Stability events
- ▶ Support for Mattapan & Dorchester community engagement
- ▶ Collaboration with Violence Transformed

#### SUPPORT FOR ARTIST-ORGANIZERS

- ▶ L'Merchie Frazier + City Life / Vida Urbana
- ▶ Anna Myer / beheard.world
- ▶ Ngoc-Tran Vu + Dorchester Not for Sale

#### LEGAL INNOVATION

- ▶ Grassroots and housing policy legal education
- ▶ Right to Counsel Coalition-building
- ▶ Re-designing housing court
- ▶ Housing policy mapping



### SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

Legal student research – Legal student arts partnerships  
 Trauma Workshops – City Life/Vida Urbana 45th Anniversary Celebration, showcasing artwork created with community members about anti-displacement organizing – “Rise Up! Dorchester Residents Share Their Stories”  
 Event in Dorchester – Office of Housing Stability Community Meeting in Mattapan/Dorchester – and Poets! Speak! Performance of poetry created in collaboration with City Life/Vida Urbana – For a full list of activities and events, please visit [www.stablegroundboston.com](http://www.stablegroundboston.com).





## KEY FINDINGS

### IMPACTS

Through the arts, a unique set of partnerships, and organizing, Stable Ground:

- (1) *Strengthened trauma-informed housing advocacy*
- (2) *Provided healing for the trauma of displacement*
- (3) *Intensified the urgent call for policy change*

Stable Ground moved the needle with respect to its goals of informing and impacting the city's housing policy to be more trauma-informed, supporting under-resourced community-based cultural organizing around affordable housing that is already happening in Dorchester and surrounding neighborhoods, and learning how to support a lawyer's approach to working with and alongside impacted communities. While the work of dismantling an oppressive housing system is not done, Stable Ground - through its inventive program structure, focus on direct support for cultural organizers and organizations already doing the work, and reflection on legal structure - made important strides and confirmed participants' instincts regarding the value of trauma-informed and culturally resonant practice. Below I describe three key impacts and how Stable Ground accomplished them.

*"Having this workshop has given me the strength to continue to fight."*

### STRENGTHENING TRAUMA-INFORMED HOUSING ADVOCACY

The clearest impact throughout the work is Stable Ground's ability to support and strengthen advocacy for more equitable housing policy and practice. The program did this by assembling a unique and varied set of actors that interact with the housing field in different ways and do not often come together. Stable Ground leveraged the power of arts and organizing to take a more holistic look at displacement than is the norm, and built a powerful network across siloes and boundaries. In particular, the inclusion of the City of Boston itself as a partner was noted by many as a unique and powerful element of Stable Ground. The dialogue between City officials, artist-organizers, and community-based advocates throughout the program helped to lay the groundwork for more trust and knowledge of each other's goals and constraints.

### For Residents

Stable Ground activities directly benefitted residents of Dorchester who are dealing with the impacts of displacement. The community-oriented events not only helped process difficult emotions (see next section), but helped residents find the strength needed to continue this hard work, connect with each other in deeper and meaningful ways, and access important and often hard-to-find policy information and resources available from the City.

### For the City of Boston

The City of Boston's Office of Housing Stability (OHS) Staff were present at group meetings and attended many of the arts events. They reported that having artists and organizers involved in their work helped them to ground their often stressful and technocratic work in human beings being directly impacted by housing instability.

*"The event helped create a deeper connection to community for me because we heard each other's personal stories about why we are involved, which perhaps we don't always have the chance to do in our regular meetings. It was really great to have a space outside of the organizing meetings to get to know each other in a new way, which I think serves to deepen our commitment and relationships with one another as a community."*

◀  
FEEDBACK

As opposed to fulfilling mandates of case work protocols on their computers, staff were asked to connect holistically with the human beings experiencing displacement and hear their stories. Staff reported that this helped them to re-connect with their motivation for public service, which can often be lost in the stress and bureaucracy of the daily grind.

*"Stable Ground allowed me to see what I wouldn't have otherwise. By incorporating art, I thought about the overarching picture rather than the nitty gritty details I am used to."*

◀  
FEEDBACK

In addition, OHS Staff reported that Stable Ground helped improve community dialogue, especially for residents in often marginalized neighborhoods. At their June community meeting in Mattapan, for the first time, flyers were mailed and printed in Haitian Creole, not just English. While the meeting was difficult and exposed many inequities and mistrust, OHS staff expressed a commitment to ongoing dialogue. In addition, staff took feedback from the meeting and began attending meetings at the Boston Planning and Development Authority (BPDA), which is the agency responsible for policy-making at a more birds-eye view level (as opposed to OHS, which is primarily a service provider). Such collaboration could help to break down internal City siloes and support better community engagement in decision-making.

*"The substantial amount of information and resources provided throughout all the workshops, gave me strength and encouragement to continue. I am not alone. When we fight we win."*

◀  
FEEDBACK

►  
DORCHESTER  
RESIDENT  
CURRENTLY FIGHTING  
TO SAVE THEIR HOME



### For Community-Based Organizations

Stable Ground also helped existing community-based advocacy organizations build deeper relationships with community members, which long-term helped sustain the work. By providing support for the hard work of regular community meetings, demonstrations, speak-outs, and more, Stable Ground lent the validation of a large institution of higher learning in Boston to grassroots organizing already taking place. With the inclusion of an arts-based approach, this work helped advocates deepen their sense of meaning in the work and gather the strength and energy needed to press forward. Several organizers and participants noted that the workshops helped them to see the value and promise in including arts-based approaches to organizing and advocacy work, and helped lay the groundwork for more arts partnerships and techniques.

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

▶ *“Stable Ground helped me connect with the City and make connections personally where I may not have had them.”*

### For Artists

The three artists-in-residence, along with other artists engaged throughout the process, were able to connect with many institutions, organizations, and City staff throughout the program, which helped them to better understand resources, policy, networks, and more. Stable Ground provided them with an additional platform to do their creative and organizing-focused work – which is often under or completely not funded, and not supported by power-broker institutions throughout the City. In addition, the program involved many youth, helping to create a pipeline for future artist-organizers and strengthening the community of people and artists involved in housing advocacy.

MARY HARVEY  
VIOLENCE  
TRANSFORMED

▶ *“Stable Ground has considerably expanded the number and range of agencies and organizations that we can now hope to do more trauma-informed outreach with in order to more fully serve.”*

### For Legal Advocates and Students

Through support for three full-time three-month-long positions (a distinguishing feature of a Northeastern University legal education), law students were exposed firsthand to the power of arts organizing and the value of direct collaboration with impacted residents. Through shadowing the artists and attending organizing meetings, the law students noted that they developed increased empathy and understanding for how difficult housing is, and the important role policy plays. One student noted that while they already understood the difficulty of housing

instability from their own experience, this position helped them to see innovative and creative ways of getting directly impacted residents to the table and involved in organizing work.

Northeastern University lawyers, professors, and staff (at the NuLawLab) and the affiliated programs (Domestic Violence Institute and Violence Transformed), shared that this program has deeply improved their level of understanding of the housing crisis and its impact on Dorchester residents. Several staff noted that their network had vastly expanded, which can help lay the groundwork for future collaborations, and help them to connect community-based organizations and residents to additional resources. NuLawLab staff are pursuing a multi-pronged research and practice effort around housing instability, including work to map major housing policies currently in legislative review, helping to support a network of Right-to-Counsel advocacy for those experiencing eviction, and helping the City re-design housing court to make it more effective and transparent.

◀ *“As a result of our work together in the poetry workshop, I was able to send participants who didn’t previously know each other to a women-of-color self-care retreat to support their healing and leadership development. These activities deepened our relationships and support for each other. We use the term – people getting their voice back – when they are organizing... Raising their voice in song or written word is an expression of resistance and solidarity.”*

DENISE MATHEWS-  
TURNER CITY LIFE /  
VIDA URBANA

### HEALING THE TRAUMA OF DISPLACEMENT

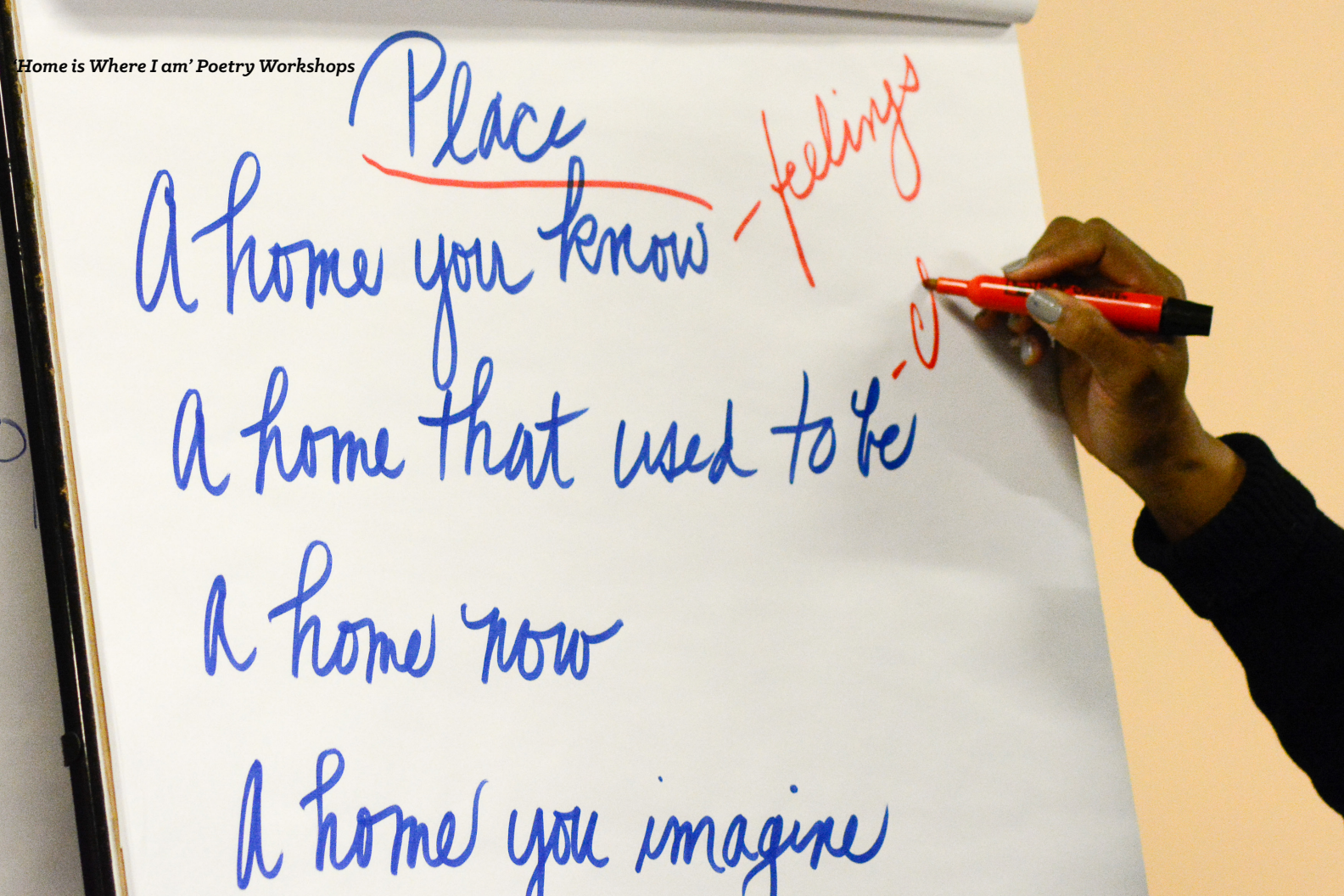
The artistic events and activities themselves provided space for residents that are dealing with the extraordinarily exhausting, dehumanizing, and unspeakably difficult process of eviction proceedings, rent and property tax increases, loss of cultural and business community, and more to find their voice, connect with each other, and process emotions.

The work also helped to elevate and center the voices of those impacted by the housing crisis, providing additional healing by re-claiming the narrative around the crisis. Providing the opportunity to participate in arts-oriented activities helped residents feel safer to share their trauma and make space for healing, without doing so in the formal context of a City meeting.





Dorchester Not for Sale Community Dinners



Home is Where I am' Poetry Workshops

Below are several poems that were written at L'Merchie Frazier's workshops at City Life / Vida Urbana.

**HOME**

*Laura Foner*

Home is a circle  
 I stand in the middle  
 As I breathe, it grows  
 Larger with each breath

**WHERE I BELONG**

*Andrea Moon Park*

Floating, flowing through  
 Spaces  
 Here is where I belong  
 I can feel, I can hear the sounds.  
 And there's where I belong.  
 I am a vibration  
 This is where I belong.

**HOME IS WHERE I AM IN FABRIC** *Denise Matthews-Turner*

I am making this place.  
 This Home is safe, warm! Welcoming.  
 I'll provide beauty, Sun.  
 My strands are strong.  
 So I can shield you from the Winds-  
 Protect you from the Storms of life.  
 But I am sometimes, fragile-  
 Treat me with care  
 So we can be there for one another  
 My fabric Home, Embraces me and mine



## INTENSIFYING THE URGENT CALL FOR POLICY CHANGE

Finally, a vital impact Stable Ground had is that it called attention to the depth of trauma involved in the housing crisis. The program educated people at various points in the housing system about housing policy. A key piece of this impact is also elevating the power of art to support activism – several of the artists noted that their work – while clearly creative and based in the arts – is not often valued in the same way as other professional studio-based artists. By supporting artists embedded in organizing work, this program reinforced artists’ expertise and arts activism through association with a large and powerful institution. By building a network and coalition united around healing and fighting displacement, the program elevated the level of urgency and need. As several City staff noted, this program helped to unify disparate groups around a common goal.

►  
**L'MERCHIE FRAZIER**  
**ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE**

*“Stable Ground focused my efforts for addressing this enormous issue and subsequently elevated my consciousness on connecting agencies involved in the City of Boston to improve the status of housing for everyone. To know that there are so many avenues to approach a given situation and provide holistic methods with policy-making at the hub or center enlarged the scope of my art-making practice.”*

Long-term impacts on the Office of Housing Stability will need to be tracked over time, but several participants noted - and I observed - that policy change was underlined by Stable Ground as a particularly vital and difficult aspect of the program’s goal. When the program began, the recently-named head of the Office of Housing Stability began serving as a Boston City Councilor. Without a leader, the Office was in flux – and on top of that, staff are strapped for time. Halfway through the year, Stable Ground’s main contact at OHS left the staff and a new Deputy Director was appointed. This staff turnover created a challenge. While the Office of Housing Stability is touted as the City’s response to the displacement crisis, it is only moderately resourced, and staff are taxed with more cases than they can handle. OHS is primarily set up to manage homelessness service contracts, landlord negotiation, and case work for those in the direct throws of eviction or displacement. OHS is not set up to directly engage policy change. Despite that, OHS staff has been instrumental in working on Tenant Protection policy and legislation, has been a partner to the Right to Counsel legislative action, and worked on tenancy protection for elders over the age of 75. It has ensured that these last two items were included in Mayor Walsh’s legislative package at the

time Stable Ground was occurring. The City’s office that more directly deals with policy - the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA, recently re-named from the Boston Redevelopment Authority, or BRA because of its nefarious history and reputation) was more difficult to engage and thus impact through this program. However, OHS staff did indicate that they were more motivated after the work with Stable Ground to engage the BPDA staff in an effort to bolster its community engagement and listening efforts.

*“When you go to Stable Ground events and talk to constituents the need for policy change is driven home. We need broad-level impact to support the high volume of difficult cases seen by many service providers in the area.”*

◀  
**FEEDBACK**



Anti-Displacement Community Circle at the Stable Ground Block Party







## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Thank you Jules, Dan, and the entire team for the opportunity to help articulate the impact of this vital work. Jules first invited me to reflect on Stable Ground after she read my paper, [Exploring the Ways Arts and Culture Intersects with Housing](#), commissioned by ArtPlace America.

The paper discussed the connection between arts, culture, and affordable housing. I appreciated the opportunity to apply my professional experience researching, analyzing, and building arts and housing projects around the country along with my personal experience exploring home and stability with my family of immigrants and forced diaspora.

I wrote this evaluation report from a first person perspective to undermine the omniscient single narrative and false objectivism that plagues evaluations, and to aim instead towards transparency of process and the welcoming of multiple voices that may help us deconstruct systems of domination (race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and others) that our current society is built upon. I tried my best to build trusting relationships with the artists in residence and other stakeholders such that their perspectives could guide my approach.

All artists and major stakeholders have reviewed and provided feedback on prior drafts of this report. I am excited to explore what it might mean to begin projects with collaborative goal setting led by those directly impacted by the issue the project attempts to engage. A participatory research framework could help to guide collaboration around evaluation that follows.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Danya Sherma (she/hers)** is a strategist and writer who runs an arts and community development consultancy based in Boston, where she works on innovation and organizational effectiveness in the public and non-profit sectors. Danya is a Senior Consultant on the Research Strategies team of ArtPlace America. Previously she founded and directed the Department of Public Programs & Community Engagement at Friends of High Line and co-founded the MIT Case Study Initiative. Her writing has been published in Next City, Shelterforce, and by Rutgers University Press. Danya holds a master's in Urban Planning from MIT and a Bachelor of Arts from Wesleyan University.

**Chelsea S. Bruck (she/hers)** is a strategist, researcher, and writer who specializes in community economic development, design, and the arts. She collaborates with public and private clients on projects that aim to create enduring positive change in communities across the country. Recent projects include work with ArtPlace America, the National Park Service, the Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board, and the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority. Chelsea holds a Master's in City Planning from MIT and a Bachelor of Arts from Northwestern University.

## APPENDIX

### I. SURVEY ANALYSIS

As part of the evaluation, all participants in Stable Ground were asked to participate in an anonymous survey about their experience. Seventeen people responded to the survey.





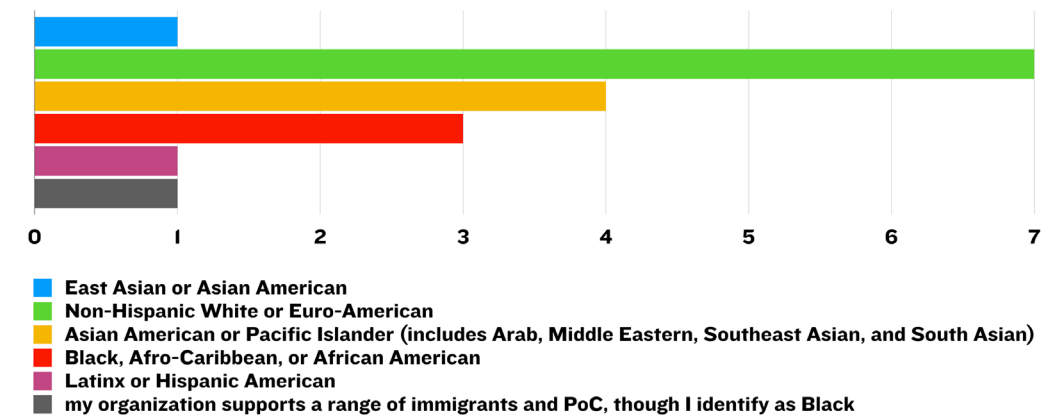
### Participants/Survey Respondents

Stable Ground survey respondents represented a diverse mix of roles/capacities. About one quarter of respondents participated in their capacity as a non-profit or community-based staff or organizer. Other respondents represented a fairly even spread of artists, students, City employees, and Northeastern University affiliates. In addition, a workshop participant, community resident, and the photographer/videographer of the events also responded.

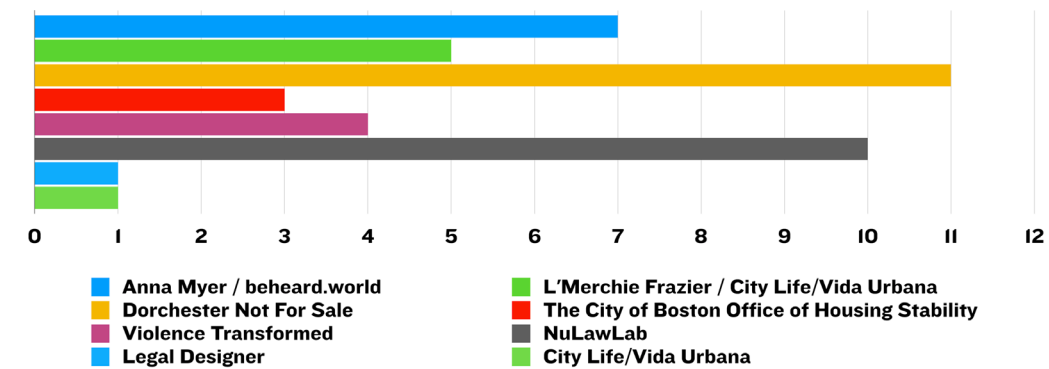
Demographically, the group of respondents was also fairly diverse in terms of racial identity. Approximately one half of respondents identified as Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American (with one of these respondents clarifying their Armenian heritage), about one third identified as Asian American or Pacific Islander (includes Arab, Middle Eastern, Southeast Asian, and South Asian), and about one quarter of respondents identified as Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American. One respondent identified as Latinx or Hispanic American.

Respondents participated in a range of Stable Ground events. Dorchester Not for Sale with Ngoc-Tran Vu had the highest attendance with 11 respondents, followed by NuLawLab with 10. Almost half of respondents indicated they attended Anna Meyer’s beheard.world, and approximately one quarter to one third of respondents also attended City Life Vida Urbana with L’Merchie Frazier, Violence Transformed, and an activity with The City of Boston’s Office of Housing Stability. One respondent participated in an activity led by a legal designer.

### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST REPRESENTS YOUR RACIAL OR ETHNIC HERITAGE? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.



### I PARTICIPATED IN ACTIVITIES LED BY: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)



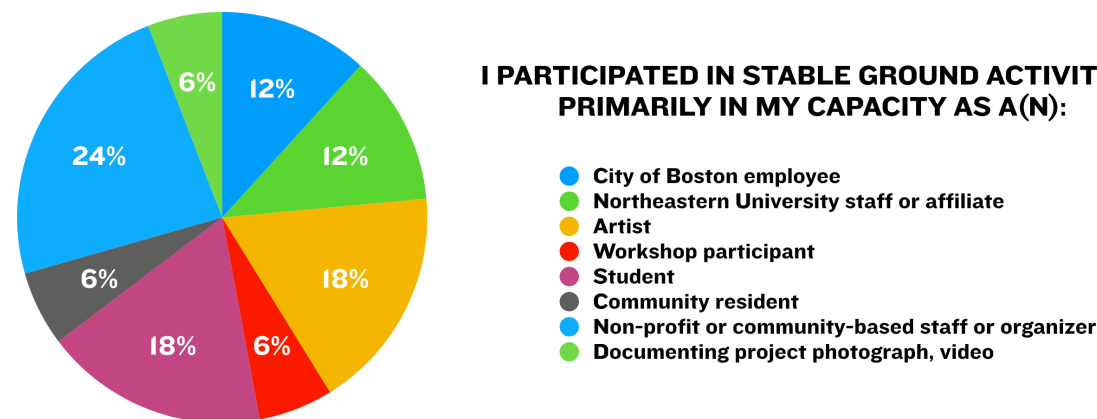
### Quantitative Questions

A series of seven questions asked respondents to provide a measurement of how Stable Ground affected their knowledge and opinions about issues of housing instability, and their abilities and motivation to be involved in work related to housing policy. The following trends emerged:

When asked whether respondents felt more knowledgeable about housing policy following their participation in Stable Ground activities, two thirds of respondents agreed, and half of that group strongly agreed. One third of the group reported that they felt “no change,” potentially as a result of their previous knowledge and expertise in the subject area.

When asked whether respondents felt they would better be able to advocate for anti-displacement housing policy, two thirds of the group agreed that Stable Ground activities helped them to feel better prepared to participate in advocacy. One third of the group reported “no change.”

### I PARTICIPATED IN STABLE GROUND ACTIVITIES PRIMARILY IN MY CAPACITY AS A(N):





Three quarters of respondents reported that Stable Ground activities left them feeling more informed about the traumatic impacts of housing instability, with half of this group agreeing strongly. Four respondents experienced “no change” in this regard.

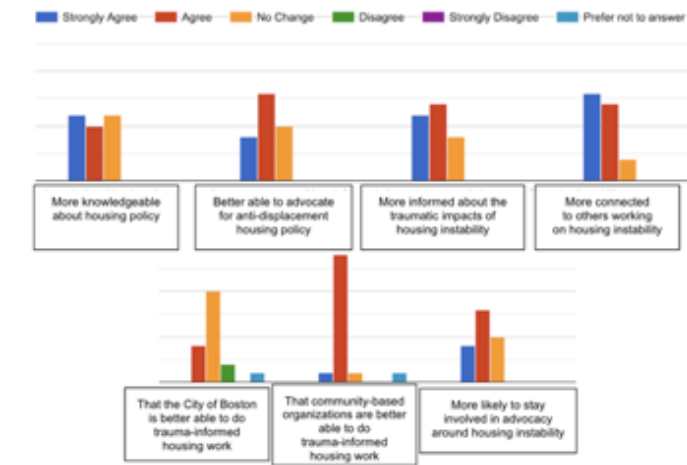
Almost everyone agreed or strongly agreed that Stable Ground helped them to connect with others working on housing instability. This question received the most positive response of the seven questions. Eight people strongly agreed with this, seven agreed, and only two said that they experienced “no change.” It’s worth noting that the people who experienced no change both only attended NuLawLab, while most other respondents attended multiple events.

More than half of respondents reported that Stable Ground did not change their perception of whether the City of Boston is better able to do trauma-informed housing work. This question received the most negative response of the seven questions. While only two people disagreed with this statement, it is significant that no other question in this section received a “disagree” response, and no question (including this one) received a “strongly disagree” response. One respondent preferred not to answer this question, explaining that they did not feel they had sufficient knowledge to answer the question. On a positive note, one quarter of respondents agreed that as a result of Stable Ground, they felt that the City of Boston is better able to do trauma-informed housing work.

In contrast to the previous question, almost all respondents left Stable Ground activities feeling that community-based organizations are better able to do trauma-informed housing work. Of 15 respondents that agreed with this sentiment, one strongly agreed. One respondent reported “no change,” and one preferred not to answer because of a lack of knowledge on this subject.

Twelve respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are more likely to stay involved in advocacy around housing instability as a result of Stable Ground. Five respondents reported “no change,” perhaps because they already felt committed to remaining involved in housing advocacy efforts.

Compared to before the project began, as a result of my participation in Stable Ground activities, I feel...



### Qualitative Questions

Many of the responses to the qualitative questions have been integrated into this evaluation report. In lieu of including all data, below are the major themes that emerged from the short answer section of the survey. Respondents shared that Stable Ground:

### STRENGTHENED COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND EXPANDED THE NETWORK FOR HOUSING INSTABILITY WORK

- » “It has given me the support and networks to further build my practice and working relationships. Thank you for the opportunity!”
- » “The Stable Ground activities led by Ngoc-Tran Vu has increased community outreach and engagement in Dorchester Not for Sale. This has increased more diverse experiences and perspectives from Dorchester residents to inform Dorchester Not for Sale’s strategy and organizing work.”
- » “The artist-led, community-based events were very successful in engaging community members with grant participants and with other community members. Also, the hosting of organizational partnership meetings by the African American Master Artist-in-Residence Program (AAMARP) really facilitated enthusiasm about the project and cross-site communication.”

### INCREASED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE HOUSING CRISIS AND RELATED ISSUES

- » “The events I participated in were informative and helped in community building perspectives.”
- » “[Stable Ground provided a] better understanding of the housing crisis and communities at risk for displacement, mostly through mapping.”



### **GREW THEIR MOTIVATION TO CONTINUE WORKING ON HOUSING INSTABILITY**

- » “The growth in the action-abled advocacy of CityLife Vida Urbana and the response of their participants during my residency was educational, reassuring and inspiring.”
- » “As a future lawyer, I plan to do pro bono work in the housing.”

### **CENTERED THE COMMUNITY**

- » “The Stable Ground events reaffirmed the importance of having community led conversations.”
- » “[Stable Ground was successful in] pouring resources directly into communities through community leaders. Often funding gets distributed to groups or organizations that does not have a pulse on the community nor do they involve themselves with the community. Stable Ground did a phenomenal job on finding community members and providing space for them to make an impact.”
- » “Although I no longer work for the City, I felt that, when I did, it [Stable Ground] gave a more human-informed and trauma-informed perspective.”
- » “Stable Ground has allowed our Dorchester Not for Sale work to include more storytelling and humanizing elements to make sure we center people in our struggle.”

### **HARNESSED THE POWER OF ART AND ACTIVISM**

- » “The artists were the strongest element of this process. Their mission and activities contribute greatly to the community.”
- » “The transformative nature of the direct art-in-service work to address social justice issues revealed the power to impact decision making and establish greater self-worth.”
- » “Art as a vehicle of expression for community activism and self-empowerment is key, for my continuing involvement and advocacy around housing instability and displacement.”
- » “This served as a reminder that there should be various ways to engage people. All of the events had the overarching goal to address housing instability but each event allowed me to think about the topic from a different angle.”
- » “My perspectives were broadened by the NuLawLab staff and others like co-artists, TAP and–

Violence Transformed concerning how to utilize art-in-action to empower communities and individuals.”

### **INSPIRED IDEAS FOR FUTURE WORK**

- » “As a visual artist, I am compelled to use the Stable Ground foundation as material for my work.”
- » “Stable Ground encouraged me to explore the integration of narrative data within traditional concepts of data information.”

### **UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE CITY’S ROLE / ABILITY TO HELP HOUSING INSTABILITY**

- » “I don’t think we have yet gotten the City to improve its trauma-informed housing work, but we’re making progress.”
- » “Sometimes, confronting the city on bad policies they have made or better arming community members to advocate in opposition to the city can have better long term effects than collaboration with the city. This might be something they could explore.”

### **UNDERLINED THE NEED FOR MORE FUNDING**

- » “Centering those most affected by displacement in our organizing” is our goal and it’s a constant learning effort. The visuals Tran created are an ongoing reminder to keep working on the goal.”
- » “The application/adjudication process revealed many very admirable projects. I see now that we need more funds so we can support more artists’ work.”
- » “Funding for a longer period of time would help cement these innovations permanently in our group.”

### **HIGHLIGHTED THE NEED FOR MORE SUSTAINED SUPPORT OF THE NETWORK, MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT**

- » “I would like to have had more cross-partner meetings ... and I would like to see more inclusion of the grass roots programs earlier on (e.g. CityLife/VidaUrbano and DOT).”
- » “Affiliations with the connected agencies and with the period of time that the law students are available [could be improved].”
- » “[The project needs] more capacity to build stronger partnerships. We’re not able to work with them as much as desired.”



- » “The biggest challenge of the Stable Ground Project is that it started so many connections and it remains to be seen how/if those connections will be sustained and built in the future. While I left before the project completed, I had the feeling that Stable Ground was just scratching the surface on bringing to light the interconnections of trauma-informed work and housing. My hope for Stable Ground is that there is pathway to sustain this work in the future and to create and maintain intentional pathways and partnerships. There is so much more to be done with this.”

## **II. INTERVIEW LIST**

In addition to those surveyed above, the following people participated in either one or several one-on-one conversations with Danya Sherman throughout the year:

- » Dan Jackson, NuLawLab
- » Jules Rochielle Sievert, NuLawLab
- » Ngoc-Tran Vu, Artist-in-Residence
- » Anna Meyer, Artist-in-Residence
- » L’Merchie Frazier, Artist-in-Residence
- » Dayle Duran, Northeastern University Law School Student
- » Mark Martinez, Northeastern University Law School Student
- » Daniel Espinoza, Northeastern University Law School Student
- » Kariri Kambuthi, Northeastern University Law School Student
- » Katherine Brady, Office of Housing Stability
- » Annie Zhang, Office of Housing Stability
- » Domonique Williams, Office of Housing Stability
- » Kara Elliott-Ortega, Mayor’s Office of Arts & Culture
- » Mary Harvey, Violence Transformed
- » Barbara Hamm, Violence Transformed
- » Denise Matthews-Turner, City Life / Vida Urbana





Anti-Displacement Community Circle at the Stable Ground Block Party