

Fernanda De La Torre

Placement: The Boston Foundation

September 9, 2022

Sillerman Fellowship Reflection

As a Sillerman Fellow, I spent my summer interning at The Boston Foundation's Neighborhoods & Housing department in Boston. The Neighborhoods & Housing department focuses on increasing the supply of available housing and improving housing stability and access" especially for BIPOC households.

Aside from different project meetings I got to attend, my time was primarily spent on two projects; a literature review regarding factors that contribute to the racial housing gap and writing a briefing memo for the President of The Boston Foundation (TBF) about a mixed housing development in Lower Roxbury,

I was happy to have started my time with a literature review to gain a better sense of what affordable and unaffordable housing looks like in the Boston area, but also how discriminatory factors have created a racial housing gap and thus resulted in a racial wealth gap through homeownership. I sought to research information regarding what types of assistance or pathways homeowners of color obtained to go from being renters to becoming homeowners but found very little information specifically to this. Although I still gained new insights into historical and current societal and structural barriers that people of color face in becoming homeowners.

Another project I worked on was regarding the Whittier Choice Neighborhood apartment development project in Lower Roxbury where I wrote a briefing memo to the President of The Boston Foundation. This briefing memo shined light to an innovative way in how development partners worked with the community to rebuild and integrate mixed income housing while preserving the culture of the community. I had the opportunity to see the development project first-hand through a site visit. The briefing memo will provide the President of TBF context prior to another more thorough site visit of the development and speak with stakeholders.

I enjoyed my summer fellowship with TBF's Neighborhoods & Housing. I had the flexibility of working remotely but having the opportunity to come in. My perspective of affordable housing and the racial homeownership gap, as well as what is being done in the community has expanded significantly. This experience has shaped my professional and graduate career in helping me narrow in on a master's paper topic (Urban heat islands and affordable and habitable housing).