

## ASSESSING HOUSING QUALITY FOR LOW- INCOME GROUPS IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT OF BANGKOK, THAILAND (1111)

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**Abstract.** The central business district (CBD) of Bangkok has a significant population of low-income migrants from Thailand and neighboring countries. This research examines their housing situation, focusing on needs, accessibility, and conditions. The study analyzes the balance between housing demand and supply. Three CBD communities were studied using quantitative and qualitative methods, interviewing 235 low-income migrants. Findings reveal poor living conditions, limited amenities, and underutilized space in privately-owned buildings. Government-owned land remains unused. Addressing housing needs for both Thai and non-Thai migrants is crucial to improve their quality of life and enhance economic productivity. Current government policies lack inclusion for these groups, necessitating collaboration between private and government-owned spaces to develop affordable housing. These measures reduce inequality, promote environmental quality, and sustainably strengthen Bangkok's economic competitiveness.

**Keywords:** Affordable housing, Low-income worker, Central Business District, Bangkok, Thailand.

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Background and Motivation

Housing units for low-income residents in urban areas are frequently considered substandard due to their inadequate amenities and location in impoverished neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are typically overcrowded and have deteriorated infrastructure, low-quality buildings, limited environmental resources, and insufficient sanitation, as noted by various scholars (Addo, 2013; Arku, 2009; Yeboah, 2005). The government has implemented low-income housing as a policy to provide support for social classes unable to afford suitable housing based on their income. Starting from the late 19th century, numerous countries have introduced distinct policies to safeguard this demographic, including "public housing," "social housing," and "affordable housing" (Ramzanpour & Nourtaghani, 2019).

Affordable housing is a critical issue in many parts of the world, and there is a large body of literature examining various aspects of the issue. Researchers have investigated the causes and consequences of housing affordability problems, as well as the effectiveness of various policies and programs aimed at addressing the issue. Studies have shown that a lack of affordable housing is linked to a range of negative outcomes, including homelessness, poor health outcomes, reduced economic mobility, and increased social isolation (Desmond et al., 2015; Newman & Holupka, 2018). Low-income households are particularly vulnerable to housing affordability challenges and may be forced to choose between paying for housing and other basic needs such as food and healthcare. (Seo & Park, 2021). Developments focused on affordable housing need to prioritize initial access to employment opportunities and social infrastructure while promoting the development of sustainable communities.

Policymakers have implemented a range of policies and programs aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing and reducing the cost of housing for low-income households. These include subsidies and tax incentives for developers, inclusionary zoning policies, and rent control measures (Hwang & Quigley, 2006; Agnew, 2010; Calabrese et al., 2021; Baum-Snow & Marion, 2009; Schwartz, 2021). While some of these policies have shown promise, researchers have noted that there are challenges to implementing effective affordable housing policies, including political resistance, lack of funding, and zoning regulations that limit the development of affordable housing (Newman & Holupka, 2018). In addition to traditional policies, researchers have investigated innovative approaches to affordable housing, such as community land trusts, cooperative housing, and shared equity models (Lang & Novy, (2014).). These models can offer affordable housing options that are sustainable and community-driven but require significant investment and support to be effective. Overall, the literature highlights the urgent need for affordable housing solutions that are effective, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of low-income households.

Research on affordable housing can help to evaluate the effectiveness of existing affordable housing policies and programs, identify best practices, and guide the development of new policies and programs that are evidence-based and targeted to the most pressing needs. Moreover, The research can help to raise awareness and mobilize support for affordable housing among policymakers, stakeholders, and the general public. By highlighting the importance of affordable housing for individuals, families, communities, and the economy as a whole, research can help to build political will and support for policies and programs that address the housing affordability crisis.

Affordable housing has not been widely developed in Thailand. This is particularly the case at the lower end of the housing market perhaps owing to deeper structural factors or inaccurate perceptions of sustainable housing. The research gap in affordable housing

that needs to be addressed in Thailand is the lack of attention given to the perspectives and experiences of low-income residents themselves. Many studies focus on housing market dynamics, policy analysis, or quantitative data, but fewer studies engage directly with the lived experiences of low-income households, their coping strategies, and their views on the efficacy of different policies and programs.

Most of the low-income people who live and/or work in the Central Business District (CBD) of Bangkok have migrated from other provinces of Thailand or one of Thailand's lower-income neighbors. All of these low-income people need to find affordable housing that meets their basic needs and offers a reasonable commute to their job or worksite. Low-income migrants tend to look for the cheapest accommodations to maximize their savings; they probably assume they will be able to upgrade their lodging if their financial situation improves. Initially, migrants often stay with a relative or personal contact until they can find a more private domicile. However, because the CBD of Bangkok has some of the highest-priced real estates in the country, migrants often end up in illegal squatter camps or slums on the perimeter of the CBD to stay within the affordable travel range of their job site. Those worker camps are typically densely populated, with poor sanitation and hygiene, and a general lack of amenities. As long as there is demand for low-wage migrant labor, these squatter settlements grow and expand, without an improvement in the environment or quality of life of the residents. Thus, the authorities in Bangkok need to address the issue of standard, affordable housing for low-income migrants since they are fulfilling the economic need of the city and country. That alone would go a long way to improving the quality of life of the lower-income migrants in the CBD of Bangkok.

The goal of this research is to improve the quality of life of low-income people living and working in the CBD of Bangkok. This research aims to study the housing situation and the housing needs of people working in the target area. The expected outcome is recommendations for suitable housing management practices in the CBD of Bangkok to reduce inequality, promote economic development, and build the ability of Bangkok to sustainably compete with other cities in the Southeast Asia region.

## **1.2 Objectives**

- 1) To study the housing needs of low-income people in the CBD area of Bangkok;
- 2) To explore the current housing situation in the CBD of Bangkok in terms of quantity, style, and price;
- 3) To analyze the balance of housing demand and supply in the CBD of Bangkok; and
- 4) To recommend management guidelines for the integration of housing for low-income people in the CBD of Bangkok, as well as to suggest guidelines for housing management in potential areas.

### **1.3 Research Scope**

The scope of this research is as follows:

- 1) Areal scope of the research: The CBD of Bangkok, comprising Pathumwan, Bangrak, and Sathorn Districts, with a focus on the area around Rama IV Road.
- 2) Content scope of the research: This consists of the study of the balance of supply and demand for housing of low-income people in the areas around Rama IV Road.

#### **2.1) The study of demand:**

- Analysis of the residential behavior of low-income individuals, both Thai and foreign, working in Bangkok's CBD. This will consider factors such as duration of stay, frequency of relocations, number of cohabitants, activities conducted within the residences, and factors influencing housing choices.
- Investigation of price-related housing demand in the CBD, including the affordability of monthly rental and ownership options for low-income individuals. This will encompass an examination of common associated housing expenses and monthly utility bills.
- Exploration of qualitative housing demand trends among low-income individuals in the CBD, focusing on preferences for location, housing size, and amenities.

#### **2.2) The study of the supply:**

- Examination of the quantity, design, and pricing of various housing options available for low-income individuals, both existing and under development, in the CBD region surrounding Rama IV Road.
- Assessment of commercial areas and buildings within the CBD that have the potential for redevelopment or conversion into housing specifically designed for low-income individuals in the CBD.

By delving into these aspects, the research aims to provide valuable insights and recommendations to address the housing needs of low-income individuals, promote equity, stimulate economic development, and enhance Bangkok's competitive position within the Southeast Asia region.

### **1.4 Definition of Terms**

- 1) "Housing" means a place for living in a building of any kind, either in the form of a monthly or yearly lease, or outright sale and ownership of said domicile;
- 2) "Low-income people" refers to those persons who have an annual income less than 100,000 baht or are eligible to enroll in the state welfare card program;

- 3) “Migrant” refers to both Thai and non-Thai workers who have moved either temporarily or permanently to work in the CBD area of Bangkok.

## **2. Concepts and Principles Related to the Development of Housing for Low-income People**

This paper presents a conceptual framework for the development of housing aimed at addressing the needs of low-income individuals residing in the Central Business District (CBD) of Bangkok. The framework is based on three key principles: affordable housing development, housing security (security of tenure), and the concept of a new urban lifestyle (New Urbanism).

### **2.1 Policy for Developing Housing for Low-income People in Thailand**

The Development Plan for Housing for Low-income People is implemented by the National Housing Authority (NHA), in collaboration with relevant agencies in both the public and private sectors. The main strategy is to construct buildings with affordable rental units for low-income people who are unable to buy a dwelling of their own, as well as to improve the quality of life for people to have standard housing until their economic situation improves.

The section of the plan to improve the quality of life states that the goal is to develop high-rise buildings with rental units for low-income people. One such initiative is the “Ban Pracharat” Project is operated by the Ministry of Finance through various support measures, and the NHA is the main sponsor.

The Development Plan for Housing for Low-income People is implemented by the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) in collaboration with local administrative organizations (LAO) and other stakeholders from the public and private sectors. The primary beneficiaries of this plan are households residing in slum communities and squatter settlements, both in urban and rural areas. Several development initiatives have been undertaken to promote affordable housing, including the Ban Mankong Project, the Canal-side Community Housing Project, and the Homeless People's Quality of Life Plan. These strategies aim to improve living conditions and provide affordable housing options for low-income individuals and families.

### **2.2 The Concept of New Urbanism**

A new urban lifestyle concept was adopted and introduced in the development of cities in many industrialized countries today (Peter, 1994 & Arendt, 2000). An important

strategy of new urbanism is creating a mix and variety of housing (Mixed Housing) in terms of size, architectural style, and price to create accessibility of higher-, middle-, and lower-income earners into the neighborhood. The design calls for a combination of housing types that include single houses, duplexes, row houses, low-rise, medium-rise, and high-rise buildings. The underlying theme of this approach is to promote and support a sustainable diversity of residents in the target community.

### **2.3 The Concept of Affordable Housing Development**

The United Nations Habitat Agenda - Adopted at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in 1996, the Habitat Agenda recognizes the need for a continuum of housing options and outlines a range of housing types, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, supportive housing, affordable housing, and market housing.

An emergency Shelter is an overnight accommodation for the homeless or persons in acute distress, used only in emergencies and short-term stays. Facilities are limited and most occupants do not stay there during the day.

Temporary housing, also known as transitional housing, is a form of accommodation designed to assist individuals experiencing homelessness in their transition to more permanent housing. It serves as an intermediate step between emergency shelters and permanent housing options. Temporary housing provides longer-term stays and greater privacy compared to emergency shelters, allowing individuals to stabilize their living situation and access necessary support services. The primary objective of transitional housing is to prevent homelessness and support individuals in their journey toward securing sustainable housing. The concept of transitional housing acknowledges the need for a supportive and transitional environment for individuals experiencing homelessness. (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2019).

Affordable housing refers to housing that is priced below the market rate and is affordable for low- and moderate-income households. It can be owned or rented and encompasses various housing types, such as apartments, townhouses, and single-family homes. The specific definition of affordable housing may vary depending on the country, region, or context.

In the United States, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordable housing as housing that costs no more than 30% of a household's income for rent and utilities. This guideline ensures that housing expenses are kept at a reasonable and manageable level for individuals and families. The policies to promote affordable housing for lower-income groups include the following: (1) Creating housing loan products that are suitable for low-income people so that they have access to credit and

can pay rent or pay toward ownership of a domicile; (2) Providing state subsidies to help low-income earners rent or own affordable, quality housing; (3) Applying diverse estate taxes and mortgage loans, leasing and buying; (4) Reducing property speculation; and (5) Developing energy-efficient housing to reduce housing costs and minimize adverse environmental impact (Sirisan et al., 2019).

## **2.4 Delivery Mechanisms for Affordable Housing**

Kulthonthip (2009) has compiled guidelines on the affordable housing policy in the UK, and this consists of the following two approaches:

- “Social rented housing” is the provision of rental housing which is owned and managed by the local government, including rental housing that has been agreed upon with the local government organization and the Housing Corporation as the entities to receive subsidies.
- “Intermediate housing” is sub-market-priced housing for a specific group that the housing market normally cannot meet. There are both types of rental housing with the intent to buy at a low price and housing for the owner of a joint mortgage.

The UK has established payable housing policies in its planning policies at the national, regional, and local levels. The UK has established regional assemblies, which are representatives of local governments. Partnership corporations work with government agencies to advise governments on the allocation of investments and types of housing to sub-regions and to develop Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) to identify the volume and guidelines for housing arrangements that correspond to affordability and respond to the needs of each area as well.

- Operating subsidies and financing (rental and purchase): This refers to below-market interest-rate loans or a subsidy that actually makes housing affordable. The use of financing in this way is to assist in the construction phase or the completion of the project to reduce the cost of a housing project. This allows housing units to be sold or rented at a lower price than in the general market.
- Deed restrictions, restrictive covenants (both rental and purchase): Deed restrictions are legal restrictions applied to all paid housing units to define the characteristics of a tenant or buyer such as income level, set length of stay, affordable housing, etc. Subsequently, restrictive covenants must be used to increase or maintain the number of affordable housing units and, due to deed restrictions, will need to be closely monitored. In particular, long-term residency programs should have agencies that closely monitor them.

- Land regulation (both lease and purchase): Land use stipulations can specify that housing is affordable. Detailed zoning is therefore an important tool, especially in markets where land prices are inflated and where the price can be adjusted by reducing the density in that area.

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## **2.5 Security of Housing Tenure**

The principle of Security of Tenure is related to two things. The first is the right to housing (right to housing, land, property) which consists of the right to adequate housing, protection from forced eviction, and the ability to access the right to housing without discrimination. Tenure and tenure arrangements are relationships between individuals or groups that can be agreed upon in many forms. These include agreements that can be or not be legally supported. There may be an oral contract or a written contract. This relationship defines various forms of access to housing and specifies controls for residency, length of stay, and various conditions from both elements mentioned above. This reflects the right to live in a dwelling and enjoy "Security of Tenure." Security of Tenure means that a person's right to live in a domicile is protected; it guarantees legal protection against forced eviction and other forms of harassment.

## **3. Survey and Data Collection**

The survey and data collection is divided into surveys of supply and demand for housing for low-income people in the CBD of Bangkok.

### **3.1 Study Area**

The spatial focus of the study is the Rama IV Road area, extending from Hua Lamphong Station to Lumpini Station by dividing housing for low-income people according to 3 types as follows:

1. Ban Man Khong Community, including the Bonkai Community
2. Dormitory/apartments of the private sector, including the Saphan Leuang Community area and the community behind Hua Lamphong railway station.
3. Flats: Ban Kai Flat, Railway Flat

### **3.2 Survey of Demand for Affordable Housing**

To understand housing needs and accessibility of housing for low-income people in the CBD of Bangkok, the survey methodology is as follows:



- 1) Target population: The researchers identified low-income people employed in the CBD of Bangkok as the target audience for the demand survey. The focus is on urban poor, migrant workers who have moved into the area. This research adheres to the definition by Dr. Supriya Wangphatcharaphol et al (2017), which refers to formal and informal workers moving into the city to earn income. This group of people is not only Thai nationals from rural areas but also includes migrant workers from Thailand's lower-income neighboring countries.
- 2) Analytical unit: The researchers have defined the unit of analysis as households of low-income people, both Thai and non-Thai. They are grouped according to 3 types: slums, flats, and privately-owned buildings with rented rooms/apartments.
- 3) Sample size: The researchers used the Central Limit Theorem to prescribe the sample size of the target population, both Thai and non-Thai, in each housing group of not less than 30 households. This makes it possible to determine the minimum sample size in this research or a total of 90 households.
- 4) Sites for data collection: Interviews in the Rama IV Road area, covering from Hua Lamphong Station to Lumpini Station, were conducted at housing for low-income people according to the following three types:
  - Slum communities, such as Bonkai Community
  - Dormitory/apartment of the private sector, including the Saphan Leuang Community area, Wat Duangkhae Community, the railway flat community, and the stone carving community
  - Flats, including the Ban Kai flats.
- 5) Questionnaire Interviews: The researchers conducted personal interviews with 235 members of low-income residents in the Rama IV area using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into four parts: Household characteristics, residential behavior, work life, and attitudes toward and needs for housing.
- 6) In-depth interviews: Three persons were selected for in-depth interviews based on being representative of low-income people who need affordable housing, and include both Thais and non-Thais. The discussion guide had questions related to the way of life of low-income people in terms of residential living, work life, and use of public spaces as follows:
- 7) Data: The analysis of housing needs and accessibility to affordable housing of low-income people explored residential behavior, including length of stay, number of

relocations, reason for relocation, number of co-habitants, activities in the residence, attitudes and factors in housing selection, and housing needs of low-income people.

### **3.3 Survey of the Supply of Affordable Housing**

The supply-side survey explored the patterns and prices of different types of housing for low-income people that are currently available in the Rama IV Road area. Due to limited access to public housing, the survey area was defined as privately-operated residential buildings in the Saphan Leuang Community area and the area behind Hua Lamphong Railway Station. The research team enumerated a total of 265 buildings, including those that presently offer lodging, and buildings that have the potential for development or converted into housing for low-income people, such as the following:

- 1) Buildings that have the potential for development as affordable housing: These include buildings with space that is not used to its full potential, such as unused or partially-used buildings; and
- 2) Land with potential for development as an affordable housing complex, e.g., unused land or land that is not being used to its full potential, and land with derelict buildings.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Results from the housing supply and demand survey: The data from the study of housing demand and accessibility for low-income people were compared with housing supply data in terms of quantity, style, and price across each housing type. The aim was to assess the balance of demand and supply, housing insecurity, and factors that contribute to the housing loss of low-income people. Those findings helped to formulate recommendations for housing management policies that are consistent with the diverse housing needs of different groups of low-income people.

## **4. Research Findings**

The research findings are based on the survey of supply and demand for affordable housing for low-income people in the CBD area of Bangkok. A survey of 265 buildings in the area, interviews with 235 low-income people in Rama IV area using structured questionnaires, and in-depth interviews with 3 low-income people who migrated from upcountry or abroad have provided information to inform the following observations:

#### 4.1 Housing Characteristics of Low-income People

Building surveys reveal that a significant portion of privately-developed housing for low-income individuals consists of tenements, hostels, and low-rent apartments. These buildings typically have mixed commercial and residential use, where the lower floors are commonly occupied by shops, while the upper floors are subdivided into rental apartments. Unfortunately, a majority of the rented apartments are in dilapidated condition. It is important to note that the quality of rental rooms varies depending on the rental price.

Furthermore, the area also contains buildings that have a relatively low occupancy rate or are underutilized, with only 60 percent of the space being used. These partially occupied buildings present an opportunity for renovation and conversion into affordable housing for low-income residents.

Table 1. Quality and quantity of low-income housing

	<b>Total</b>
<b>number of buildings surveyed</b>	<b>265 (100 %)</b>
<b>building condition</b>	
new	10.19 %
old	64.15 %
wane	25.66 %
<b>building type</b>	
residential	32.06 %
commercial	5.73 %
mixed-use	62.21 %
<b>building utilization</b>	
fully use	39.57 %
partially use	59.15 %
abandon	1.28 %

#### 4.2 Work Characteristics of Low-income People

The work characteristics of low-income people in the CBD of Bangkok differ between Thai and non-Thai residents. Most Thais work in the informal sector, including as small entrepreneurs, such as food stall vendors, taxi drivers, and even full-time employees with stable jobs. The foreign migrants generally work in temporary jobs or daily wage labor and, thus, have a high chance of being laid off or having to change work locations and jobs depending on their employer. Due to the nature of their employment, they face a higher risk of experiencing layoffs and job instability. The lack of job and income

stability has become a significant barrier to their ability to own affordable housing provided by the government.

Table 2. Employment of low-income earners by nationality

<b>Work characteristics</b>	<b>Thai</b>	<b>Non-Thai</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number of samplings</b>	<b>214 (91.06 %)</b>	<b>21 (8.94 %)</b>	<b>235 (100 %)</b>
<b>Occupations</b>			
government officials and employees	5.58 %	-	5.05 %
small business owner	49.75 %	-	44.95 %
general staff	16.75 %	-	15.14 %
employee	13.20 %	95.24 %	21.10 %
Motorcycle taxi/Food delivery driver	7.61 %	-	6.88 %
People who work at home/craftsmen	2.54 %	-	2.29 %
housewife/butler	4.06 %	4.76 %	4.13 %
students	0.51 %	-	0.46 %
<b>Monthly income</b>			
Less than 10,000 Baht	40.91 %	28.57 %	39.73 %
10,001-30,000 Baht	57.58 %	71.43 %	58.90 %
More than 30,001 baht	1.01 %	-	0.91 %
pension 700 baht	0.51 %	-	0.46 %
<b>Number of years working</b>			
Less than 1 year	2.03 %	9.52 %	2.75 %
1-5 years	18.78 %	42.86 %	21.10 %
5-10 years	20.30 %	42.86 %	22.48 %
More than 10 years	58.88 %	4.76 %	53.67 %

### 4.3 Affordability of Housing for Low-income People

The housing accessibility of low-income people can be classified based on the length of their stay in a particular area. There are typically two main groups:

1. Long-time residents: This group consists of individuals who have lived in the area for a significant period. Long-time resident low-income individuals may have better housing accessibility compared to recent arrivals due to their established networks, stability, and familiarity with the local housing market. They may have had more time to secure affordable and suitable housing options, such as owning a house or renting a stable residence.
2. Recent arrivals: This group includes individuals who have recently migrated or moved into the area. Recent arrivals among low-income people may face more challenges in terms of housing accessibility. They may encounter difficulties in finding affordable housing due to limited resources, lack of established networks, and unfamiliarity with the local housing market. As a result, recent arrivals may initially rely on shared housing arrangements or temporary housing options until they can secure more stable and affordable housing for themselves and their families.

New immigrants, both Thai and foreigners, often initially opt to live together with others to save on rent expenses. However, as they establish a stable income, they tend to transition towards living alone or with their families. This shift towards independent or family-based living arrangements is often driven by the desire for increased privacy and the ability to create a more personalized living space. In addition, many new immigrants also aspire to turn their homes into opportunities to run their businesses. By utilizing their living spaces for entrepreneurial purposes, they aim to generate additional income and establish a foundation for their economic stability. This entrepreneurial approach allows them to maximize the potential of their homes and create a dual-purpose space that serves both as a residence and a venue for their business endeavors.

Table 3. Housing accessibility of low-income people classified by length of stay

The ability to access housing	Thai		Non-Thai	
	New	Established	New	Established

	comers	residents	comers	residents
<b>Housing types</b>				
Townhouse/Twin House/Townhome	1.41 %	-		
Shophouse/Lease house	77.46 %	65.73 %	100 %	100 %
Apartment/Flat/Dormitory	21.13 %	34.27 %		
<b>Ownership</b>				
House ownership	1.52 %	16.42 %	-	-
Leased house	77.27 %	58.21 %	90 %	100 %
House on installment	4.55 %	15.67 %	-	-
Employer-provided accommodation	4.55 %	6.72 %	5 %	-
Shared living	12.12 %	2.99 %	5 %	-
<b>The number of households members</b>				
1 person	14.29 %	5.67 %	5 %	-
1-2 persons	41.43 %	22.70 %	20 %	-
3-5 persons	41.43 %	60.99 %	75 %	100 %
More than 5 persons	2.86 %	10.64 %	-	-
<b>Relocation</b>				
Yes	59.18 %	13.39 %	5.88 %	-
No	40.82 %	86.61 %	94.12 %	100 %

#### 4.4 Housing Demand of Low-income People

The housing needs of low-income people in the CBD area vary between Thai and non-Thai. Foreign migrant workers, due to job insecurity and limited access to government housing programs, often do not prioritize saving for better housing options. Instead, they tend to allocate their disposable income towards remittances to support their families in their home countries and build up savings. While they may desire higher-quality housing, their current financial priorities lead them to prioritize familial obligations and savings accumulation over improving their living conditions.

Table 4. Housing demand of low-income people by nationality

Housing demand	Thai	Non-Thai	Total
Number of samplings	214 (91.06 %)	21 (8.94 %)	235 (100 %)
Reasons for house location			

<b>Housing demand</b>	<b>Thai</b>	<b>Non-Thai</b>	<b>Total</b>
transportation/convenience	21.12 %	10 %	19.89 %
near the workplace	16.15 %	90 %	24.31 %
location/amenities	45.34 %	-	40.33 %
affordable price	16.15 %	-	14.36 %
other	1.24 %	-	1.10 %
<b>Housing problem issues</b>			
<b>no problem</b>	<b>93.79 %</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>94.48 %</b>
environment problems	1.24 %	-	1.10 %
too many family members.	0.62 %	-	0.55 %
cramped condition.	1.86 %	-	1.66 %
other	2.48 %	-	2.21 %
<b>Demand for future housing type</b>			
single house	14.29 %	-	12.71 %
townhouse /townhome	3.11 %	-	2.76 %
condominium/condominium/mansion	0.62 %	-	0.55 %
commercial building	-	-	-
apartment/flat/dormitory	4.97 %	-	4.42 %
not sure/move according to work	-	5 %	0.55 %
<b>no plan to change residence</b>	<b>77.02 %</b>	<b>95 %</b>	<b>79.01 %</b>
<b>Demand for future housing location</b>			
want to be close to the original	78.38 %	-	78.38 %
want to move to another place	21.62 %	-	21.62 %
<b>Demand for future housing ownership</b>			
rent	1.24 %	-	1.10 %
buy	5.59 %	-	4.97 %
build it yourself	4.35 %	-	3.87 %
already have a house	6.83 %	-	6.08 %
live with the employer	3.11 %	-	2.76 %
<b>Don't know</b>	<b>78.88 %</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>81.22 %</b>

#### 4.5 Ability to Pay for the Housing of Low-income People

All groups of low-income earners have managed to find affordable lodging options, enabling them to work in the CBD. However, a significant number of low-income people, especially foreign migrants, are compelled to share accommodations with co-workers or non-relatives in order to have some disposable income. Housing insecurity is particularly pronounced among foreign migrants, who often face challenges in securing stable and suitable housing arrangements. The need to share housing with others highlights the financial constraints and limited housing options.

Table 5. The ratio of housing rent to the household income of low-income earners by nationality

The ratio of housing rent to household income	Thai	Non-Thai	Total
Less than 10 percent of household income	22.22 %	-	18.18 %
11-20 percent of household income	23.33 %	40 %	26.36 %
21-30 percent of household income	30 %	40 %	31.82 %
31-40 percent of household income	15.56 %	15 %	15.45 %
41-50 percent of household income	4.44 %	5 %	4.55 %
More than 50 percent of household income	4.44 %	-	3.64 %

#### 5. Conclusions and Discussions

This research aims to comprehensively examine the housing situation and identify the housing needs of low-income workers in the CBD of Bangkok. The primary objective is to provide evidence-based recommendations for suitable housing management practices within the CBD area that effectively reduce inequality, promote economic development, and enhance Bangkok's sustainable competitiveness among other cities in the Southeast Asia region. By analyzing the specific housing challenges faced by CBD workers, this study seeks to contribute to the formulation of strategies that can ensure equitable access to housing, foster inclusive urban development, and strengthen the city's long-term competitive position.



## **5.1 Housing Quality for Low- income Groups in the Central Business District of Bangkok**

### **1. Quality of residential living of low-income people**

Low-income people, especially young migrant workers, have relatively poorer living conditions and quality of life than other workers due to the congestion of their lodging, lack of hygiene, and lack of basic amenities. This situation is compounded by insecurity in work and/or domicile, or the need to be prepared to change jobs and relocate on short notice. Thus, many of these itinerant workers only carry a few days' clothes and any equipment they need to use as part of their job. Their rootless lifestyle means that they have little interaction with the community or neighborhood. Still, many of the low-income workers work in parts of the service industry that are vital to the CBD and Bangkok as a whole to keep functioning smoothly. However, because they sense that they are only temporary residents of the city, they do not have much incentive to invest time or resources in improving the quality of life in their surroundings. Therefore, housing development programs to accommodate migrant workers, both Thai and foreign, need to create a sense of being a stakeholder in the host community to help lift and maintain the quality of life of these neighborhoods and dwellings. That will also help to stimulate the local economy. Unfortunately, current government policy does not adequately address the housing needs of low-income people in cities around the country. This is a policy gap that needs to be addressed in the next cycle of urban development planning.

### **2. Imbalance in the supply and demand for housing for low-income people**

A study of the housing market and housing in the research area explored the affordability and housing demand of low-income people. That study found that the housing supply was out of sync with government housing demand and that imbalance limited access to housing for the underclass. Most government housing policy that includes the lower-income segment of society targets people with a stable career and income security. However, this narrow approach makes it impossible for many low-income people with no fixed income to access state housing. Even though rental units comprise the largest proportion of low-income housing, the supply is not enough to meet the needs and affordability of those in most need. For example, many of the lower-income residents of the inner city require kitchens and space to prepare food that they will sell on the streets or at food stalls. However, most rental units do not provide such culinary amenities.

### **3. Lack of housing security for low-income people**

When looking at housing accessibility and quality of life for low-income people in the study area, housing instability is caused by income instability when a worker cannot

qualify for residence in apartment complexes or other housing that is reasonably stable. Also, those who are able to rent need tenure security, meaning that tenants are not at risk of forced eviction and are protected by law against unreasonable treatment. At the time of data collection, many areas that are pending development have become temporary shelters for low-income squatters.

## **5.2 Recommendations for Affordable Housing Development for Low-income Groups in the Central Business District of Bangkok**

In conclusion, this research seeks to investigate the current housing situation and identify the housing needs of low-income workers in the CBD of Bangkok. The following are highlights:

- Some groups of low-income people have a disproportionately lower quality of residential living that is also well below standard.
- Developing public housing for low-income people is not meeting the need; quality standard housing with amenities is either too expensive or exceeds 30% of the average household income of the lower-income group. Thus, most workers without families share lodging in crowded conditions to save on housing costs.
- Low-income people in most of the study areas lacked housing security. Most were either living in a short-term rented room or an extended rental without a lease. The Baan Mankong Bonkai Complex renews the annual lease agreement with the Crown Property Bureau. Some foreign workers live with employer-provided lodging but without employment contracts. In sum, nearly all groups of lower-income workers in the CBD area are not living in stable housing.

The results of the study show that the development of housing for low-income people in Thailand is inconsistent with the New Urbanism concept, which emphasizes the importance of diverse housing combinations in the same neighborhood. Thus, the development of housing for low-income people in the CBD area of Bangkok needs to take into account the diversity of existing and potential dwellers. There needs to be attractive and affordable housing for a range of incomes that meet quality standards. The increased opportunity and accessibility of low-cost housing reduce disparities and promote environmental quality.

Furthermore, within the framework of affordable housing development, it is essential to ensure that housing for low-income individuals does not exceed 30 percent of their total household income. This includes not only rent but also expenses related to housing maintenance and utilities. To achieve this objective, comprehensive management guidelines are necessary to ensure that housing options within the CBD area truly align with the needs and financial capabilities of all residents.

Particular attention should be given to low-income individuals who lack housing security, including foreign workers, transient groups, individuals affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and those experiencing homelessness. In the limited area of the Bangkok CBD, these individuals can form a significant sub-population. Therefore, it is crucial to develop housing solutions specifically tailored to their circumstances, enabling them to access safe and affordable housing options that provide security and stability.

By implementing effective management strategies, such as rent control, subsidies, and targeted support programs, the goal of providing suitable and affordable housing for all residents, especially those facing housing insecurity, can be realized within the confines of the Bangkok CBD area. This approach not only addresses the immediate needs of low-income individuals but also contributes to creating a more inclusive and socially sustainable urban environment.

Lastly, the concept of transitional housing development or housing during the transitional period from homelessness holds significant importance in achieving housing security. However, this concept has not received adequate attention in Thailand thus far. Transitional housing refers to housing options that offer temporary support to individuals at risk of homelessness, aiming to prevent such situations. It falls between emergency shelters and permanent housing, providing longer-term stays and more privacy than emergency shelters.

Thailand continues to experience a steady influx of migrants from rural areas of the country, as well as from neighboring regions, towards Bangkok and industrial centers. Within this population, vulnerable and marginalized groups are inevitably present, often facing various stages of crisis. From a humanitarian perspective, it is crucial to support these new migrants, enabling them to pursue a better quality of life and gradually enhance their productivity and contribution to society.

It is recommended that the National Housing Authority (NHA) collaborates with the private sector to establish a rental housing project catering to the needs of low-income individuals. This collaboration should be based on the principles of supporting housing extensions ("Housing Ladder") and implementing a waiting list system, ensuring equal access to affordable housing for low-income individuals from all groups within the commercial center of the city. By incorporating these measures, the NHA can effectively address the housing needs of low-income individuals while fostering inclusivity and equitable housing opportunities.

## **6. Recommendations for Future Research**

This research was mainly focused on the demand side by building an overall understanding of the situation of residential living of low-income workers in the city

center on/around Rama IV Road, and their need for housing. However, the key to increasing urban productivity from the perspective of housing for low-income workers is how to provide stable housing and sufficiently meet the needs of those workers in terms of both quality and quantity. A future research project that would be very useful is a supply-side study that examines the issues from the perspective of real estate entrepreneurs, owners of buildings or land, government agencies, financial institutions, etc. That would provide a better understanding of the development conditions, potential, limitations, and how to use tools in terms of finance, organizational operations, and law for making this type of project successful in the future.

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