

Uptown Chicago Energy Benchmarking Research

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Abstract

Through the City of Chicago's Energy Benchmarking Ordinance, buildings over 50,000 square feet must report on the building's energy information. After reporting this information, the building is given a Chicago Energy rating and required to display their number to the public. However, information on the buildings architect, developer, and engineer are not required making it difficult to hold buildings with low rating accountable. The research for my project consisted of trying to collect that data and seeing if there would be a way to hold poor rating buildings responsible to hopefully spark more eco-friendly building developments.

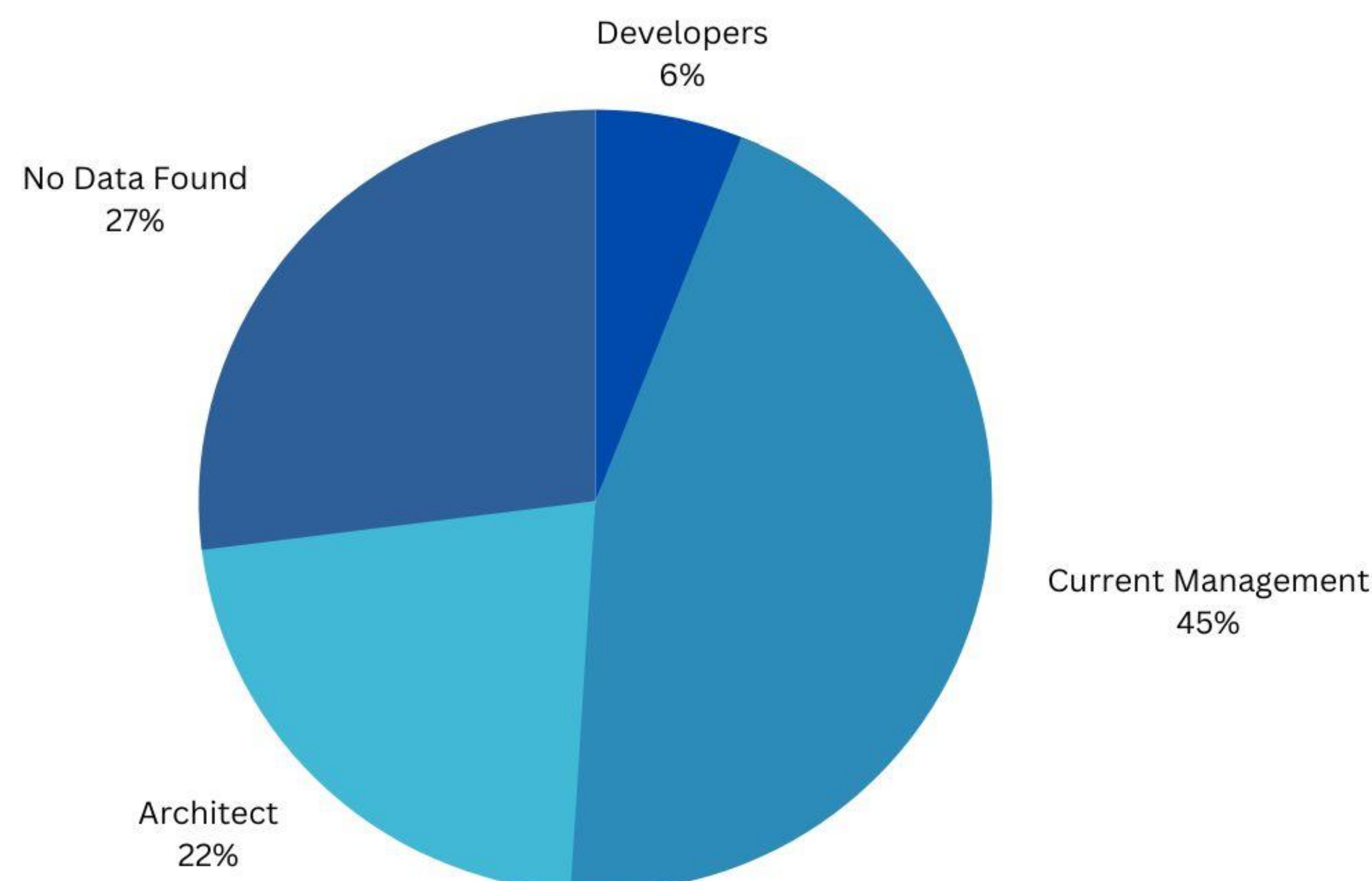
Introduction/ Background

In 2013, Chicago adopted the building energy benchmarking ordinance which highlighted transparency for buildings energy performance. Buildings in the city exceeding 50,000 square feet were now responsible for tracking and reporting their buildings energy usage every three years. This information was then made public to ensure the public had access to the buildings information's. The city also issued a Chicago Energy Rating which is a zero-to-four-star rating based on the building's energy efficiency. All buildings are given a place card that must be publicly displayed in the building. The hope is that buildings will want that four-star rating and will move to improve their buildings efficiency. To get started on my project I utilized the Chicago Energy Benchmarking data from 2019 and focused only on the buildings in Uptown to have a sample of the buildings provided.

Objectives

The idea was to create a list with all the buildings in Uptown over 50,000 square feet accompanied by the architect, developer, and current management to create even more transparency. The architect/ developers name next to a low energy rating might inspire them to make some energy efficient changes to their buildings. Another goal of this research was to see how accessible information like architecture, developer, and engineer were to the public. Overall, this project's goal was to find ways to hold buildings accountable for their energy efficiency and work towards greener infrastructure.

Information Found for Uptown Buildings

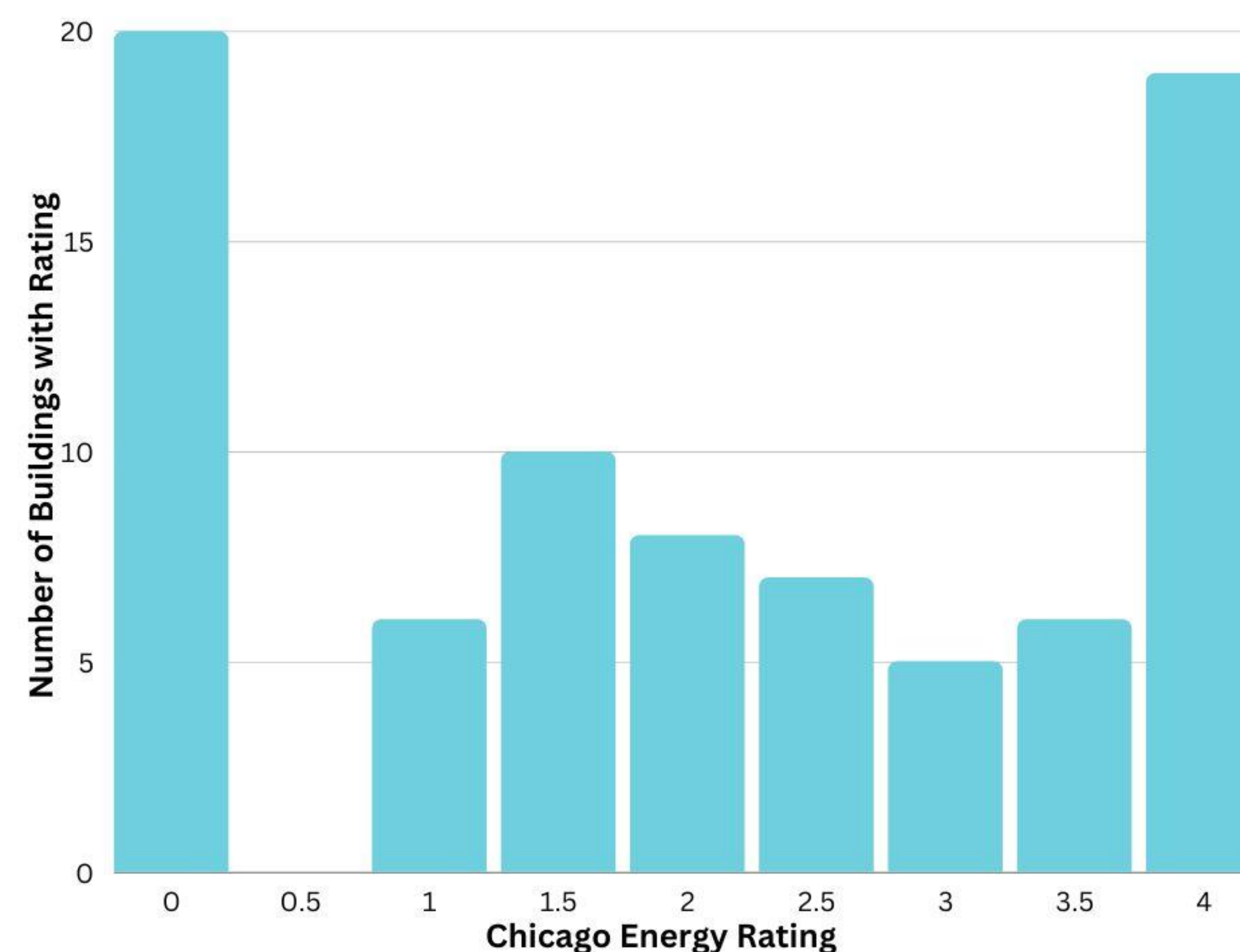


Methodology

While atypical, the goal of this research was to see how accessible buildings information was therefore I relied on programs like google to try and access information. Most of my searches led me to websites like apartments.com, rentfinder.com, and even management websites. When that fell short, I leaned on the alderman's three terms in office to see if he know of any current management or developers. While there were developments in the 46th ward through his time in office, Alderman Cappelman also adopted a lot of historical buildings when he became alderman making it difficult to find any of the information I was looking for.

Another option was calling management companies and see if they had any information on their buildings. I found that many buildings did not know much information on their own buildings blurring the lines of transparency.

Uptown Chicago Energy Rating Distribution



Results

25% of buildings in uptown have a Chicago Energy Rating of 0. A zero can indicate an incorrect submission of data or failure to report at all. 24% of buildings had an energy score of four, the highest available for buildings.

Through my research I found that the most information was found on current management, the least important of information needed to hold buildings accountable. Information found on architects was only found for 22% of the buildings.

With little information available to the public, it would be hard to compile a list holding buildings accountable. This research showed that there need to be more regulations and accountability for buildings that report data for the Chicago Energy Benchmarking. While there are a mix of historic and modern buildings in uptown, the probability for finding the respective information was about the same for both building types.

Conclusion

There was no correlation between buildings Chicago Energy Rating and my ability to find information about their buildings. It was extremely difficult to locate information on buildings architects, developers, and engineers using everyday search engines and efforts. When finding information about developers the buildings could have been built 50 years making it complicated to try and hold them accountable.

It is not required for buildings to provide the architect, developer, or engineer when reporting their benchmarking data. However, if buildings were required to report on this information, people or companies could be held accountable for their impact on the environment. It is most important that building report correctly and the City of Chicago acts on buildings with low Chicago Energy Scores.

Steps like restricting permits for buildings that have not reported data is something the city could do to make the data useful. Another step is requiring data about the architect, developer, and engineer to create more transparency with the public. Finally, buildings with high Chicago Energy Ratings should be rewarded and vice versa to encourage other buildings to more towards energy efficiency.

