



## Paul's Environmental Justice Plan

Chicago's history as a 19th and 20th century industrial power has left our city with a legacy of environmental degradation. The largest polluters are often located near our most vulnerable populations, which are already disproportionately impacted by disinvestment and crime. The health and well-being of Chicago requires an integrated strategy that brings all people together in an inclusive, community-based decision-making process to safeguard our environment, for today and for the future.

A healthy city is one where environmental justice and climate resiliency are incorporated into all aspects of municipal operations. It results in a healthy quality of life for all Chicagoans.

The Vallas administration will make Climate and Environmental Justice an organizing umbrella to protect and improve the quality of life for all Chicagoans, while creating an economic renaissance for our great city. By adhering to Environmental Justice Principles, the Vallas Administration will end the practice of locating environmentally-challenged industries in poor communities of color, and undertake a long-awaited environmental cleanup that will remove obstacles to real economic growth and job creation in those long neglected communities and work to give meaning to the right to a healthful environment possessed by each person under Article XI of the Illinois Constitution

**Paul will unify and strengthen the network of environmental and community organizations working to assess, advise, and prioritize the issues facing our city, while strengthening partnerships to safeguard our environment. This approach will include:**

- Building on the Independent Community Development Authority (the CDA laid out in Paul's 21st century Burnham Plan) to appoint a citywide environmental advisory council that includes community members from impacted communities, including multigenerational representation, environmental nonprofits, city departments and sister agencies to incorporate environmental considerations into early and ongoing stages of economic and housing development.
- Relaunching a fully-resourced Department of Environment in fiscal 2024 to meet the current and future environmental issues the City faces. This will mean consolidating existing operations from various departments offices under one roof.
- Partnering with the city's historically disenfranchised, most notably returning

citizens, to provide the professional development pathways that integrate them into the growing green economy.

- Gathering existing Conditions and Vulnerability Assessments and making them a part of all infrastructure, economic development and public health decisions and strategies, to ensure public health atrocities will not be covered up, and will not occur. A Vallas administration will ensure accountability and transparency, to prevent another Hilco implosion from occurring, to prevent high-polluting industries from harming human health along the Calumet River, and to prevent developments like MAT Asphalt from ignoring the health of black and brown communities. A Vallas administration will prioritize accessibility, water quality, and clean technology for all.

### **Climate mitigation, resiliency and environmental justice will drive the Vallas Administration's work.**

Key issues will be assessed and addressed through these lenses. A Vallas Administration will focus on (1) Water Access, (2) Land Management, (3) Waste Reduction, (4) Clean Air, and (5) Energy Efficiency.

#### **Water Access**

Water is a Human Right, just as is our public health and safety. Our lake, open waters and rivers are assets. A Vallas administration will protect and utilize these crucial resources to improve human and ecosystem health while creating opportunities for new green jobs.

A Vallas Administration will:

Address the immediate and long neglected crisis of lead and PFAX toxic chemicals in our drinking water, by prioritizing investment and activation of funding to improve the abhorrent current rate of pipe replacement and filter provision across the city.

Overhaul the City's budget with an eye toward equitable billing structure and bill assistance. Water bills – or any critical bills such as electricity - should never cause residents to lose their homes.

Improve conservation and stormwater management practices. Millions of gallons of water can be saved each year by incorporating best practices from across the nation. We can make use of green infrastructure - including surrounding green spaces - for irrigation, business promotion and job creation, while putting vacant properties to work that may not be safe for human access.

Ensure Chicago can meet or surpass clean water laws, including combined sewer and water overflow provisions and stormwater management ordinances.

Prioritize community water access to make open spaces more sustainable and produce community-based jobs in installation and management of these resources.

Open a long overdue dialogue and engagement with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District to explore partnership in a multi-agency regional approach to water management to integrate the Chicagoland area's hydrology cycle into a single, holistic management plan.

## **Land Management**

Open spaces and vacant lands are critical infrastructure for air and water quality, our habitat and community quality of life.

A Vallas Administration will:

Direct the citywide environmental advisory council to develop an equitable approach to open land management that balances community economic and housing needs. We will ensure that decisions regarding land use are not controlled by economic interests and aldermanic desires.

Consider open and underutilized lands as critical community-based assets that are the focus of careers and new, environmentally focused business opportunities by and for those in the community where that land is. Existing networks, including land trusts, will be consulted, expanded, and incorporated into decision-making for underutilized land.

Treat our urban canopy as a critical infrastructure asset by implementing an urban forestry strategy that increases capacity for proactive, programmatic tree population management through Forestry, Transportation, and Water Management entities and critical nonprofit partners. This will include diversifying our species, properly planting trees, and protecting cyclical pruning and care from political preference.

Fully reinstate and expand the Emerald Ash program to insure injections and hazard tree removal are prioritized, with planting increased to stabilize our tree population.

Improve management of contaminated properties by working with the State to identify environmental risks based on property history and utilizing a consistent treatment for contaminated sites to turn the liabilities of underutilized, contaminated properties into assets for neighborhood gardens, urban agriculture, schoolyards, and local business and housing development.

## **Waste Reduction**

Addressing waste is more than just recycling. Aside from the management of the material itself, Chicago's waste - public and private - represents 6% of carbon emissions.

A Vallas Administration will:

**Reduce:** Evaluate opportunities for reducing waste. From the production stage to packaging and retail, Chicago's economic stature should incentivize business, through regulation or incentive, to provide goods we need without saddling us with inordinate waste.

**Reuse:** Nonprofit organizations successfully manage art, equipment, building material

and textile reuse programs today. Materials collection and reuse management can establish an entire economy, creating and sustaining jobs as an added benefit.

**Recycle:** Recycling rates across the city are too low, and the City's enforcement is too lax. We must bolster inspection and compliance across the city to ensure materials that can be recycled are recycled. We will create and invest in existing processing facilities, and introduce swapping processes with projects across the city, so that one company's waste materials become another's assets. And we will build upon existing community composting pilots to incorporate residential, institutional, and restaurant food waste into a city-wide, holistic compost production program.

## **Clean Air**

Air pollution is a preeminent issue that fuels environmental injustice in our city, disproportionately impacting communities of color.

A Vallas administration will:

**Electrify fleets:** City departments and sister agencies, including the CTA fleets, will be fully electrified by 2040 or sooner, and we will leverage federal, state, and local dollars to help private fleets convert.

Enforce and strengthen air ordinances, regulations, and practices for private fleets, including localized construction equipment.

Place, maintain, and monitor comprehensive air quality monitoring equipment to inform the City's enforcement and decision-making.

Institute a robust inspection program for all facilities with air permits.

Assess new, large-scale distribution facilities with local communities in order to determine the impact of truck traffic on local roads and pedestrian and community thoroughfares.

Require that all permitting decisions relating to major industrial and commercial operations be made on the basis of rigorous cumulative impact analysis.

## **Energy Efficiency**

Energy efficiency and renewable energy are critical elements in the fight to mitigate climate change. The Vallas Administration will prioritize building energy retrofits and renewable energy installation, to reduce emissions, improve air quality and housing affordability, and create green business and job opportunities.

A Vallas Administration will:

Prioritize building energy efficiency, including building electrification. We must prioritize funding to improve energy efficiency in Chicago's South and West sides to ensure housing is climate resilient and protected from extreme heat and cold.

Coordinate all City departments and sister agencies to work with local and regional

partners to maximize the funding Chicago receives from the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. This funding can enable climate resilient and environmentally just investments that will help create substantial generational change and community wealth.

Bring together businesses and nonprofits to collaborate in order to achieve the maximum return on investment from all the financial resources deployed to incentivize renewable energy production, installation, and maintenance in Chicago.

## **Enforcement**

The best laid plans require credible firm, but fair, enforcement.

The Vallas Administration will take action to rebuild trust and improve air, land, and water quality for all by creating a new environmental enforcement program that equitably and proactively enforces environmental regulations in Chicago. This initiative will change how the city identifies, evaluates, reforms, prioritizes, surpasses, and enforces environmental priorities and laws. Community and agency experts will collaborate with sister agencies to establish fair and equitable permitting and violation enforcement policies and procedures.

“I understand the critical environmental issues Chicagoans face and will work tirelessly, with each of our City’s communities, to address them.”

- PAUL VALLAS