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The following Labor Day blog was written by Mayor Kevin Johnson exclusively for NBA.com:

“Let's get right to the point: it's not about basketball.

“It's about jobs, which makes today -- Labor Day 2011 -- the perfect time to talk about the transformational project taking shape in Sacramento.

“Jobs and economic development are why an unprecedented alliance of labor, business, political and community folks have united to build a new Entertainment and Sports Complex and make Northern California the permanent home of the Sacramento Kings. Nothing like this has ever been seen in Sacramento -- organized labor and groups like the chamber of commerce, state senators and assembly members, local elected officials, 100 percent aligned to create 4,000 jobs and pump billions of dollars into our regional economy.

“The jobs will come from the Sacramento region and stay in the Sacramento region. This program is strictly local.

“Beyond creating jobs, we are building a cultural events center that will serve the next generation. We are filling a void in our community, since it's become clear time is running out for Power Balance Pavilion, the former Arco Arena. Arco Arena was cheaply built with a limited lifespan when it was constructed in 1987. At the time, other arenas were costing two and three times the price of Arco Arena.

“By the late 1990s, the Sacramento arena was becoming marginal, thanks to loading dock limitations, small kitchen facilities and the lack of premium and club seats. Most fans didn't know about the kitchens and loading docks. For them, the arena held fond memories of fun nights. The community's wake-up call finally came in late 2009, when the NCAA announced it would no longer hold the men's regional Final Four playoffs in Sacramento.

“The regional playoffs were fan favorites, but it wasn't the fans that drove the NCAA's decision: it was the building, which the NCAA said was inadequate. That was the reality check Sacramento needed. If our community couldn't provide a worthy stage for major college basketball, how could we hope to hang onto an NBA team?

“In late October 2009, I made a speech informing the region we would have to build a new Entertainment and Sports Complex. The project would be a priority for the Sacramento region.

“Those were difficult words to speak in 2009. Many political leaders in Sacramento were still reluctant to talk about a new civic center. They were haunted by a 2006 arena ballot measure that got clobbered by Sacramento County voters. For three years, no public official in Sacramento would risk political capital by talking about the need for a new facility, even though everybody knew the threat of losing the Kings was increasingly real.

“The approach from the mayor's office was different. We began with the "Rules of the Game," which spelled out exactly how Sacramento would build a new complex: The taxpayers would come first, our city would not be used as leverage, we would negotiate on even terms and we would think in and out of the box.

“Since that moment, Sacramento has followed the Rules. And as the negative repercussions of the economic recession have continued to overshadow our community, we have adapted the “Rules” to include the priority of creating jobs.

“Much progress has been made since 2009. With the support of NBA commissioner David Stern and the Maloof family, the Sacramento community rallied to prevent the Kings from relocating to Anaheim. Mr. Stern and the Maloofs have made it clear they believe in Sacramento. They have given us until March 2012 to demonstrate we have the realistic ability to build a new Entertainment and Sports Complex and they are working alongside us to make it happen.

“We appreciate the deadline and intend to honor it.

“This week, our regional task force "Think BIG Sacramento" will release a major report on arena funding sources called the Nexus Report. The work will provide a menu of financial resources to support the new civic center, including private contributions, money from those who will benefit from the building and public support.

“The regional support we have seen the past few months is remarkable. "Think BIG" is comprised of community leaders, elected officials, business owners and labor leaders from across six counties. For months, they have worked together in the trenches. In the upcoming months between now and the holidays, our "Think BIG" team will finalize the funding options. And from January to March, we will negotiate agreements with relevant parties as we prepare to break ground and pour concrete in Sacramento's downtown rail yards redevelopment site.

“Some people will be counting the days until the first basketball game in the new pavilion. As for me, I will be savoring the image of cranes in our skies and 3,700 workers on the payrolls, building our future.”

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