My Hoopster Hero Honored for Creating a Sustainable City

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Two summers ago, I had the honor of introducing Mayor Kevin Johnson at the Clinton Global Initiative America meeting in Chicago. We'd been working together quite a bit on green building and green schools efforts since 2010 when we were together at a conference I organized in Sundance, Utah on "Greening America's Schools."

I remember my intro for him at CGI pretty well because it traversed a central point: that the character of success has no boundaries – whether on a court or in a city hall.

I remember telling the audience about the first time I was absolutely AMAZED by Mayor Johnson (incidentally, one of the NBA's slogans was "Where Amazing Happens"). I was in high school and a huge basketball fan. He was point guard for the Phoenix Suns, and I was watching him play the Houston Rockets. For the most part, it was an unremarkable game. It was just kind of moving along, when KJ, as they called the Mayor back then, suddenly drove baseline, leaped in the air and dunked over Hakeem Olajuwan, one the tallest and most dominant centers in the game. I instantly jumped off the couch and was whooping and hollering at my TV screen. It's easily one of the best dunks in all of basketball (yes, there is a Youtube video, and yes, it is amazing).

As an aspiring point guard myself (although one who never got close to the rim), I really loved that dunk. And I loved KJ as a player. But as much as I loved watching him play, it's been even better to see him go into public service and watch him transform Sacramento.

And he's using all the same skills, the dedication, the perseverance, and especially the leadership. Now he's driving on a whole bunch of other baselines, like the number of dollars saved, kilowatts conserved, buildings retrofitted, green buildings constructed clean energy technologies employed, and new jobs created. Mayor Johnson is putting ideas into action and working to realize his vision to make the Sacramento region the greenest in the country.

Look at the scoreboard:

- He launched Greenwise Joint Venture, a regional nonprofit organization dedicated to the goal of transforming the Sacramento area into the "Emerald Valley," the greenest region in the country and a hub for clean technology.
- He developed the comprehensive Greenwise Regional Action Plan, articulating a shared sustainability vision with the input of more than 100 strategies brainstormed by 275 policy committee members who donated 13,000 hours of volunteer service.
- He participated in the Greening of America's Schools Summit, helping develop a national action plan for improving America's schools.
- He committed to retrofit 12 million square feet of commercial property as one of the first five cities invited to participate in President Obama's Better Buildings Challenge.
- He partnered with Ygrene Energy Fund to make $100 million available for energy upgrades to property owners within Sacramento.
- He partnered with the Center for Green Schools to provide an inaugural Green Schools Fellow in the Sacramento City Unified School District to advance sustainability best practices in the city's schools.

Mayor Johnson won a lot of awards in basketball. And he deserves the same recognition for his record as a public servant.

Next week at Greenbuild, our organization will be honoring him with our 2012 Richard M. Daley Legacy Award for Global Leadership in Creating Sustainable Cities.

When KJ gets to the podium and our CEO Rick Fedrizzi hands him the award, don't be surprised if I spill out of my chair whooping and hollering.

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