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For Immediate Release

## Sioux Falls, South Dakota gearing up for its own Levitt Shell

*"Levitt at the Falls" set to open in 2019*

April 21, 2016— The Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation is thrilled to announce that Sioux Falls, South Dakota, will be home to a new permanent Levitt venue, presenting 50 free concerts every year featuring a diverse range of emerging and acclaimed talent. Set to open in 2019, Levitt Shell Sioux Falls will be located within the city's beautiful and historic namesake, Falls Park, and will be known locally as "Levitt at the Falls." This new venue will be part of the national network of permanent outdoor Levitt music venues with locations in Arlington, Texas; Bethlehem, Pa.; Denver, Colo. (opening in 2017); Houston (opening in 2018); Los Angeles; Memphis; Pasadena, Calif.; and Westport, Conn.



Home to the breathtaking Big Sioux River Falls that inspired the city's name, Sioux Falls is the largest city in South Dakota, with over 160,000 residents and serving a quarter of a million people regionally. Spanning 73 square miles, the city boasts over 70 parks and greenways, including the 123-acre Falls Park adjacent to downtown. This expansive and verdant park features some of the city's oldest buildings as well as the waterfalls, which drop an average of 7,400 gallons of water

down 100 feet of two billion year-old pink quartzite each second. Upon completion, the currently underused entrance to Falls Park, known as Falls Park West, will be transformed into the site of a state-of-the-art outdoor concert venue, spanning from downtown's bustling 5<sup>th</sup> Street north to the park. The fluid, organic shape envisioned for Falls Park West pays homage to the way the Big Sioux River interacts with downtown Sioux Falls.

While the Levitt Foundation typically supports the creation of permanent Levitt venues in larger cities, Sioux Falls stood out as a community that could support the 50 free concerts every year. As Sharon Yazowski, executive director of the Levitt Foundation explained, "Typically we partner with cities that are at least 400,000 in population due

to financial sustainability and audience development considerations. However, the more the Foundation learned about Sioux Falls, its growth trajectory, the community's displayed commitment and civic pride, and its visionary leadership to create programming that will bring people together, the more we realized Sioux Falls was an ideal match."

In addition to being the largest city in South Dakota, Sioux Falls is one of the most diverse as well. Within the Sioux Falls School District there are now over 60 languages spoken. As Sioux Falls native and Friends of Levitt Sioux Falls Board Vice Chair Jennifer Kirby shared, the diversification of the city's population has brought with it a growing need "to be more intentional about creating a sense of community—creating places where we can all gather. We need places where everyone feels like they belong, where everyone is welcome."

After reviewing numerous public spaces, Falls Park was identified as the prime location for Levitt Shell Sioux Falls, specifically the southwest portion of the park, Falls Park West. Don Kearney, director of the City's Parks and Rec Department views Falls Park as "the people's park." In particular, Falls Park West—despite its lack of infrastructure—has played host to a variety of successful annual events over the past decade, pointing to its tremendous promise as a place for more consistent programming. "It's a place where people from all cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds feel comfortable," said Kearney, "Whether it is at the Farmer's Market on Saturday mornings or the Mayor's Fourth of July Picnic, everyone feels welcome in our City's namesake."

Centrally located on the city's bus line, surrounded by distinct neighborhoods and directly adjacent to the city's increasingly vibrant downtown, the Levitt site will be easily accessible to a wide range of socioeconomic groups and people of all ages. Levitt at the Falls will celebrate and build upon the inclusive spirit that already exists in this particular green space, while creating a permanent space to host community events and highlight local traditions.

The Levitt at the Falls partnership between Sioux Falls' public and private sectors has garnered enthusiastic support and aligns with the City's efforts to add further vitality to the downtown core, while illustrating the viability of Falls Park West as an ongoing community destination that will attract people from throughout the city and the region.

Over the past few months, Kirby and her fellow board members have already raised over \$500,000 in individual gifts toward the total \$4.6 million capital campaign, positioning them to wrap up phase one of their fundraising strategy at the end of April. They're simultaneously working closely with the City, which has committed \$2.5 million to the project, to initiate the RFP process for selecting the architect to design the Levitt venue. The Levitt Foundation's gift of \$500,000 in seed funding will go towards the capital campaign as well. The final phase of fundraising, which will be determined based upon remaining need, will wrap up 2017, allowing for construction to begin in 2018 and concerts to launch in 2019.

Bringing people together is what drives the Levitt Foundation—from the venue planning and development phase to the free concerts where everyone gathers, strengthening communities throughout the launch process and beyond. Sioux Falls Mayor Mike Huether embraces this idea wholeheartedly. “The Levitt at the Falls will be the perfect fit for our vibrant downtown as it will provide a wonderful quality of life boost serving everyone young and old, rich or poor. We love the outdoors, hanging out with friends and having fun, and this great investment will prove to be the place to be for that and more!”

For more information, visit: <http://www.levittsiouxfalls.org/>

### **About the Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation**

The Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation is a private family foundation that exists to strengthen the social fabric of America. Through its support of creative placemaking projects, the Levitt Foundation empowers communities to transform neglected public spaces into welcoming destinations where the power of free, live music brings people together and invigorates community life.

The Foundation's primary funding areas include **permanent Levitt venues** and the **Levitt AMP [Your City] Grant Awards**, an annual grants competition. The Levitt network of permanent outdoor music venues and AMP concert sites collectively presents the largest free concert series in America, serving more than half a million people annually through 400+ free, family-friendly concerts. As an example of the high caliber talent presented across the Levitt network, the 2016 GRAMMY nominees include 21 artists who have performed on Levitt stages in recent years.

Permanent Levitt venues are located in cities as diverse as **Los Angeles** and **Pasadena**, California; **Westport**, Connecticut; **Bethlehem**, Pennsylvania; **Memphis**, Tennessee; and **Arlington**, Texas. Each permanent Levitt venue is programmed, managed and supported by its own 501(c)(3) Friends of Levitt nonprofit organization, presenting 50+ free concerts every year featuring acclaimed, emerging talent to seasoned, award-winning performers in all music genres. Due to accelerating interest from cities and engaged citizens, the signature Levitt program is growing. Developing Levitt locations across the country include **Denver** (opening 2017) and **Houston** (opening 2018), and **Sioux Falls** (opening 2019) amongst other cities. Learn more: <http://www.levitt.org>.