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Levitt Pavilion leader touts benefits of new Sioux Falls venue

Jodi Schwan, jschwan@sfbusinessjournal.com 11:03 a.m. CDT November 1, 2016



(Photo: City of Sioux Falls)

The future Levitt Pavilion in Sioux Falls could have significant economic and social impact, according to the executive director of the California-based Levitt Foundation.

Sharon Yazowski is in Sioux Falls this week to kick off a fundraising campaign for the downtown live music venue through the Sioux Falls Area Chamber of Commerce.

While Levitt typically helps fund outdoor music pavilions in communities of at least 400,000 people, "the more we learned about Sioux Falls and its trajectory for growth as well as the stable economy there, and it's a very generous philanthropic community, we felt very comfortable partnering with Sioux Falls," Yazowski said.

Levitt venues host more than 50 events annually as part of a concert series. They are free, and the idea is to become a draw for people of all ages and backgrounds.

"Most venues see over 100,000 people," Yazowski said. "That creates foot traffic for the surrounding area, and that foot traffic is an economic driver. So we see new restaurants and we see existing restaurants and retailers get a boost in business."

The park where the venue is located also sees increased use, she said.

The Sioux Falls venue is planned for Falls Park West, across Phillips Avenue from the Uptown development. It will be able to accommodate about 1,500 people.

Levitt has studied the social impacts of its program for four years, Yazowski said. The open lawn setting means people bring blankets and chairs and interact with those around them, she said.

"It's free and there's high-quality music," she said. "People are authentically and truly connecting across demographic boundaries."

Design has started on the Sioux Falls project, and the venue is scheduled to open in 2019.

The \$4.6 million project is being funded through a combination of city sales tax and contributions from the national Levitt organization as well as local Friends of Levitt organization. The chamber fundraising campaign is aiming to raise about \$1 million.

Levitt has six permanent venues nationwide and 15 affiliated sites. New pavilions are opening in Dayton, Ohio and Denver, which Yazowski said "positions Sioux Falls beautifully between the two when it comes to routing programs and artists."

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