

January 25, 2023

To whom it may concern:

I am delighted to express my heartfelt support of the application by the Sacred Heart Center (SHC) for a special use permit through the City of Richmond to continue operating a food bank at 1400 Perry Street, Richmond VA 23224. If granted, SHC will continue serving families in need, through culturally responsive food access. As a local farmer donating organic produce to this worthy endeavor, I can attest to the critical need that Sacred Heart helps to meet by operating their food bank.

I have operated Amy's Garden, a USDA Certified Organic farm in Charles City county, for over twenty years. I have seen firsthand that SHC has an extraordinary track record of providing high-quality services for marginalized families in Richmond, VA. SHC focuses on connecting Latino families with the tools to thrive and flourish. Guided by their values of compassion, inclusion, collaboration, and commitment to a compassionate approach, SHC serves vulnerable people in various ways and co-creates empowered communities. Their reputation should leave no doubt that SHC has contributed and continues to contribute to the overall well-being of the Southside Richmond community. They have been operating the food bank since 1999. From my experience, this is an organized process, by appointment, that does not have any undue impacts on the Manchester neighborhood, nor is detrimental to the safety of the community. Whenever I arrive to donate produce, always on food distribution days, the pantry staff and volunteers are gracious, responsive, efficient and eternally grateful. The clients of the food pantry are equally as lovely, I have never seen a large crowd or anything but orderliness at the SHC food pantry. The system of distribution SHC has in place provides each family with a one-on-one, safe, caring experience; the looks of sincere gratitude on the faces of the pantry clients are evident each time I visit.

As organic farmers we are passionate about the health and wellbeing of our community, increasing access for all to nutrient dense produce and we want to support organizations that help fight food insecurity. We are honored to count SHC, who shares this vision and priority among our most immediate neighbors and partners. The food bank will continue to be a much needed, positive addition to the community and will contribute to the community well into the future, once the permit is granted. The importance of SHC as a culturally relevant food pantry cannot be overlooked.

Amy's Garden is proud to partner with SHC in its mission to provide quality and compassionate services for members of our community, and we are requesting your approval of their special use permit.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,  
Amy Hicks  
Amy's Garden  
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