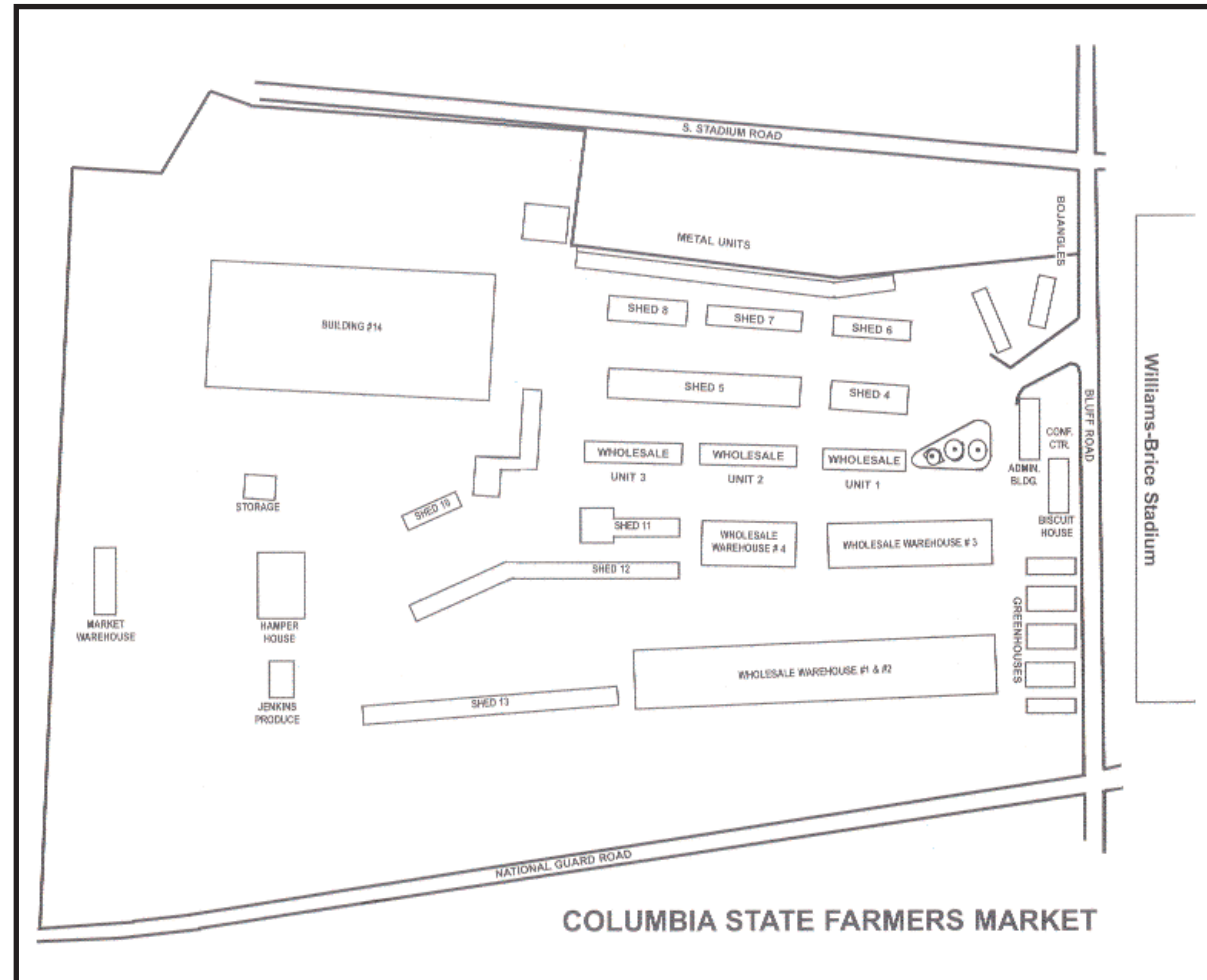


Columbia State Farmers Market

The Columbia State Farmers Market includes 40 retail units, about 600 open stalls, 140,000 square feet of wholesale warehouse space, and several food establishments. A state-of-the-art 100,000 square foot farmer trucker shed is surrounded with roll-up doors and has six lanes for drive-through convenience. Also, the Ramage Conference Center where the state's Art and Agriculture Watercolor Collection is exhibited was completed in 1997.

Farmers markets are not only an essential source of income for family farmers, but they also provide locally-grown, nutritious fruits and vegetables, fresh plants and flowers as well as other farm products for many people---especially those living in urban areas. They bring more people into downtown areas, have a rejuvenating economic effect upon nearby businesses, and play an important role in urban development.



Columbia State Farmers Market

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C · O · L · U · M · B · I · A

State Farmers Market





History

The Columbia State Farmers Market began as a small public market on the ground level of the original Columbia town hall. By 1860 at least part of the market had moved west to the center of Assembly Street. During the Depression years, work relief programs of the New Deal resulted in renovation, improvements, and new construction. Part of the WPA resulted in sheds for the Assembly Street market. In 1951, the Market was relocated from Assembly Street to Bluff Road across from Williams-Brice Stadium. Three of the original structures located on Assembly Street were moved to that location. The move cleared Assembly Street of stalls and booths, but the concrete median which remains today symbolizes the market's earlier existence.

Economic Impact

The Columbia State Farmers Market is essential to the growth of agriculture and agribusiness in the state, especially in the Midlands area. It gives farmers, particularly small farmers, a place to market directly to consumers, retailers, and wholesalers, and it gives consumers a place to buy fresh, safe, wholesome produce and colorful plants. About \$275 million and 1/2 billion pounds in produce as well as an estimated \$6 million in ornamental horticulture products travel through the Columbia Market annually. Ranked 2nd in the nation behind Atlanta in volume of produce handled, the Columbia Market employs about a thousand full-time and a thousand part-time seasonal workers, excluding state employed management and staff.

Plant and Flower Festivals

While buying and selling produce has traditionally been the primary focus at the Columbia State Farmers Market, more and more people have become interested in ornamental horticulture, so the Market now hosts spring and fall plant and flower festivals that attract visitors from all areas of the state.

The events generate significant revenue for exhibitors and provides quality plants and flowers for the buying public. Visitors passing through the market on their way to and from the show have an opportunity to stop and shop along the way for produce and other agricultural products.

Grading, Inspection & Market News

The Columbia State Farmers Market is home to Fruit & Vegetable Inspection, Poultry Grading & Inspection, Fruit & Vegetable Market News, and Livestock and Grain Market News. The Market News Service collects and disseminates price, volume and other market information from shippers, wholesalers, brokers, and market vendors to all segments of the produce, livestock, and grain industries and to consumers.

Hours of Operation

The State Farmers Markets are operated by the South Carolina Department of Agriculture Marketing Division. Retail vendors are open 6 AM to 9 PM, Monday through Saturday, and 1PM to 9 PM on Sunday. Wholesale vendors are open 24 hours a day.

