



## City of Bristol Tennessee

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### **State Street Farmers Market - A Look Back** **During Farmers Market Week August 4th – 10th**

There are now 8,144 farmer's markets listed in the National Farmers Market Directory. When State Street Farmers Market opened in 1999 there were around 2,000 markets listed. You might say Bristol's State Street Farmers Market was on the cutting edge. This year during National Farmers Market Week the city takes a look back at how the market came into being.

One of the founding members of the farmers market was, former City Councilman Fred Esser. Recently Esser recalled how the market came to be. "Actually, no one thought it was a good idea at first. It really was my mother-in-law who got me to thinking about it. She would go one day to First Presbyterian Church to buy produce from farmers and then a day or two later go to Central Presbyterian to buy from that group of farmers. It just seemed like a cool idea to me to get them all together in one place; organize it a little bit."



Prior to the market being established, a committee was formed with representatives from Sullivan County, TN; Washington County, VA.; and the cities of Bristol, TN and Bristol, VA. The committee traveled to Lynchburg, Virginia to visit a farmers market there and was told by market officials "build it they will come."

"The renovation of the train station was going on at that time, so we had an anchor for the east end of State Street. My thought was maybe we could build a market area on the other end and let it be the anchor for the west end and you see what happened," Esser continued, referring to the return of a viable downtown area with shops and restaurants.

And so it was, the State Street Farmers Market was born out of a little economic development need and the realization that farmers were in Bristol already selling their produce but not in one centralized location.

This year the market is celebrating its 14<sup>th</sup> Farmers Market Week. Each week farmers from across the region come to the Bristol market and sell fresh locally grown produce straight from the fields. Like many other markets in the region State Street Farmers Market is focusing on sustainability and maturity of farmers markets. Local market officials are members of the Appalachian Farmers Market Association. "This group works to keep new and older markets thriving and improving. Farmers markets are important to a community, offering social events for families, a gathering place for its seniors, and a learning environment for children," said Mike Musick, Recreation Superintendent for the Parks and Recreation Department who oversees the market for the city.

The State Street Farmer's Market is located at 810 State Street and is open on Saturday mornings at 8:00 AM and on Wednesday afternoons at 3:00 PM. For more information on the market go to [www.statestreetfarmersmarket.com](http://www.statestreetfarmersmarket.com) or contact Mike Musick at 423-764-4026 or email [mmusick@bristoltn.org](mailto:mmusick@bristoltn.org).

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