Welcome to the Parks and Natural History Tour! Today you will learn history about Raleigh’s four original parks, travel to each of them and discover their importance today. You will also pass by the world’s largest globe replica.

To get started let’s talk a little bit about the original city plan for Raleigh.

Surveyor and former North Carolina state senator William Christmas was hired to develop the plan for the city. Christmas modelled his design after William Penn’s Philadelphia Plan, creating a one-square-mile grid of perpendicular streets with integrated green space, centered on Union Square (now Capitol Square), which was designated as the site of the State Capitol building. Four, 99-foot-wide thoroughfares acted as the main arteries: Fayetteville, Halifax, Hillsborough and New Bern streets. Each of the city’s quadrants contained a four-acre square with public green space, named after state leaders Richard Caswell (northwest of Union Square), Thomas Burke (northeast), Alfred Moore (southeast) and Abner Nash (southwest). Each featured diagonal pedestrian pathways, lawns and commemorative elements, including statuary and civic art.

This tour was developed and narrated by the Raleigh Digital Connectors program, a nationally-renowned program providing technology and leadership training for youths ages 14-18.
The N.C. Executive Mansion is the official residence of the governor of North Carolina and his or her family. The executive mansion is a beautiful example of Queen Anne architectural style because of its asymmetrical build and highly-ornamented facades. Construction began in 1883 and the structure was designed by architects Samuel Sloan and A.G. Bauer. The executive mansion is not only home to the governor, it is considered the “people’s house.” The building is also a meeting space, historic site and an elegant event location and thousands of visitors tour the mansion each year. Gov. Roy Cooper is the 70th governor to hold the office in North Carolina since the end of the American Revolution and the 30th governor to live in the mansion. It was described by President Franklin Roosevelt as being “the most beautiful governor’s residence interior in America.” Admission is free; however tour reservations must be made at least two weeks in advance and hours are limited and vary seasonally.

Located just across Hargett St. from City Hall, this lush landscape contains lawn, a variety of perennials and many native shade trees, including oaks and magnolias. The four sections of the park are symmetrical, with a network of paths containing lawn, a variety of perennials and many native shade trees, including oaks and magnolias. The four sections of the park are symmetrical, with a network of paths connected to the four corners of the square, each one splitting in two near the site’s edge to provide multiple entry points from the perimeter. Four additional paths act as the main entrances to the park, bisecting each of the sidewalks surrounding the square along Dawson, Hargett, McDowell and Martin streets. Central to the park is a small plaza that houses the 50-foot-wide N.C. Fallen Firefighters Foundation Memorial. Dedicated in 2006, it features a bronze sculpture depicting four firefighters atop a hexagonal cement slab. The sculpture is surrounded by a low, segmented brick wall inscribed with the names of firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty. Feel free to enjoy the beauty and history of this beloved square.