

Planet Walk Goes Up with a Big Bang in the Delmar Loop

By Kristen Hinman
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On a scale of one to 5 billion, where does Uranus stand in relation to the sun?

Well, if the sun is the Moonrise Hotel, and "5 billion" is Cicero's Restaurant, Uranus would be parked right at Brandt's Cafe.

That's the gist of the new Delmar Loop Planet Walk opening on November 8 with a "Big Bang" party and ribbon-cutting. The interactive walk - a la the Loop's already-popular St. Louis Walk of Fame - represents a scale model of the solar system.

Instead of stars molded into concrete, the Planet Walk is comprised of five-foot-tall signs bearing fun facts of astronomy.

At 2,800 feet long, the walk will begin at the Moonrise with a model of the sun and follows west, ending at Cicero's, with Neptune's likeness.

And what about Pluto, you ask? "Pluto has been demoted," explains Stephen Walker, the Planet Walk's creator. "The International Astronomical Union met in 2006 and decided Pluto would be downgraded to a dwarf planet."

Walker, a graphic designer for SSM Healthcare by day, dreamed up the idea several years ago after being intrigued by the Sagan Planet Walk in Ithaca, New York. He'd been scouting for a good St. Louis location when he stumbled upon the then-planned construction of the Moonrise Hotel.

The hotel's developer, Joe Edwards, adopted the idea immediately and proceeded to drum up \$20,000 in funding from University City and St. Louis.

"Throughout the world there are about 24 such walks," says Walker. "Twelve of them are in the U.S, but apart from one in Wisconsin, we're pretty much loners here in the Midwest -- so it makes it that much more exciting."



Courtesy of Stephen Walker

Wanna know where Saturn stands in relation to the sun, kiddies? Do your astronomy homework in the Delmar Loop!