

# Safety Harbor's First Green Building... a Buddhist Meditation Hall



What do a Buddhist monk, a volunteer developer with a penchant for meditation and a tree-hugging contractor from Seattle have in common? They are building the first-ever green structure in Safety Harbor, and it just happens to be a Buddhist meditation hall.

Most residents here freely admit there's nothing ordinary about Safety Harbor. It is a charming community – an enclave – that somehow seems to defy the faster-pace of life elsewhere in Pinellas County.

However, for the past day and a half, the mood at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street South here has been anything but laid-back. A three-man framing crew erected all of the exterior walls of the 34-foot x 28-foot Buddhist meditation hall in a fraction of the time they would have spent laying concrete block. And tomorrow, they plan to have it dried in. In five weeks, the construction manager said the project would be complete.

## Platinum Technology Walls Earn Building Green Status

The new meditation hall, part of the Parbawatiya Buddhist Center that first opened here 11 years ago, provides instructions on meditation based on Buddhist teachings. And while the concept of meditation goes back centuries, today's practitioners will enjoy meditation classes in this community's first state-of-the-art *green* building. The walls, manufactured by Platinum Advanced Technologies Inc. (PAT), combine structural strength and insulation in a single building product.



The patent-pending product is made of light-gage

steel, reinforced polyurethane and fiberglass sheeting, according to Ms. YoungJin No, construction manager for Parbawatiya Buddhist Center. Ms. No, a licensed Florida general contractor who also heads Green Field Development, said the innovative walls are stronger and significantly more energy-efficient compared to batt insulation commonly used in traditional wall assemblies. Also, she said, the new walls are more waterproof, airtight, mold-proof and offer a better barrier protection against termites than traditional products.

**“Walls are stronger, straighter and more energy efficient”**



Ms. No, project manager, said walls are stronger, straighter and more energy efficient.

“We chose this technology primarily because energy savings are built into the product,” said Ms. No. “Also, it’s faster and easier to build with these new walls, and we made a conscious decision to use green, environmentally sensitive products,”

## “The walls for the meditation hall are about four times better than concrete block in terms of insulating ability,”

The new high-tech walls deliver a stronger, safer home than traditional concrete block, and save on heating and cooling costs for the life of the building, according to builder Dennis Hill, a Seattle native, and a licensed Florida general contractor now living here. Mr. Hill said he sought the most energy-efficient, green building product and chose Platinum Technology after his research. In terms of energy efficiency, the four-inch-thick walls provide an R-Value\* of 24.5, according to Mr. Hill, an experienced builder of more than 300 energy-efficient homes over the past quarter-century.



Dennis Hill, a contractor who has built more than 300 energy-efficient homes, said Platinum Technology makes it easier to build green.

The Platinum Technology walls come to the jobsite ready to assemble in four-foot wide panels and a variety of popular ceiling heights, according to a PAT spokesperson.

The company noted that its technology could save 100 trees for every 2,000 sq. ft. home, uses recycled materials and means less carbon dioxide in the environment. Also, the new building product means less construction waste, so landfill demands are lower.

In addition, the area's susceptibility to hurricane-force winds means walls need to be stronger, and the strength of the new Platinum Technology walls can be seen in video of a wind debris test by an independent laboratory on the company's website: [www.platinumadvanced.com](http://www.platinumadvanced.com).

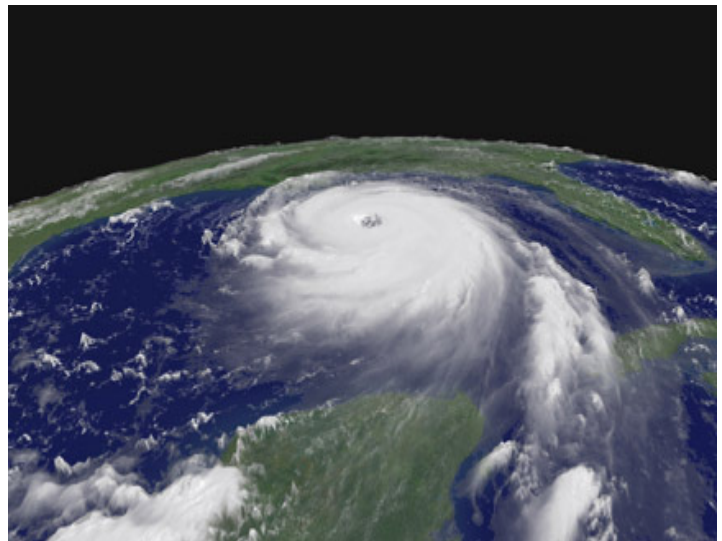
The technology impressed Danny Sandlin, a building official in the City's Building Department, who likes Platinum Technology and endorses the trend toward the use of better building products.

"I expect to see more and more builders using this technology because it's energy-efficient and it's strong," said Mr. Sandlin. "After all, heating and cooling costs are rising, and we are in hurricane alley,"

Contractors and developers like Mr. Hill and Ms. No agree that the benefits of sustainable design and energy conservation are better accomplished now through building with products like Platinum Technology walls, ceiling and roofs.

*"Sure, for some the initial appeal might be to their pocket book," admits Mr. Hill. "But, ultimately the appeal is to the greater senses. It's the smart thing to do in today's environment."*

Ms. No, who looks forward to using Platinum Technology for two new upcoming projects, said it simply enough:



"Through meditation by contemplating the benefits of virtuous minds and the faults of non-virtuous minds," she said. "And with mindfulness and effort throughout the day we try to abandon non-virtuous actions that lead to suffering and practice virtuous actions that lead to happiness. When you apply that philosophy to inanimate objects like buildings, *green building* is a virtuous method of construction."

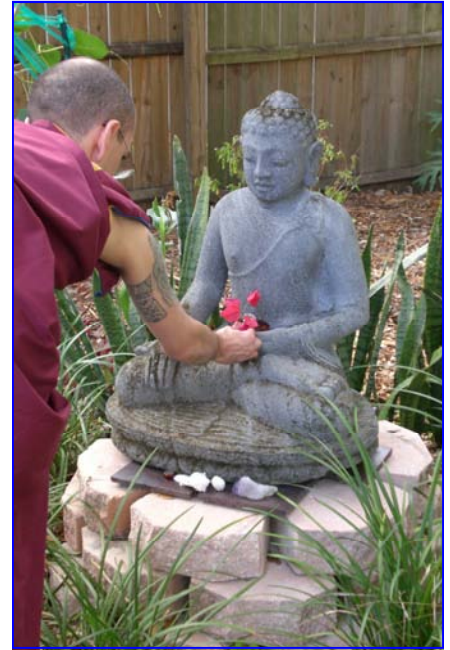
*"In fact, the new meditation hall looks like any other residential building. But it's the inside that makes all the difference."*



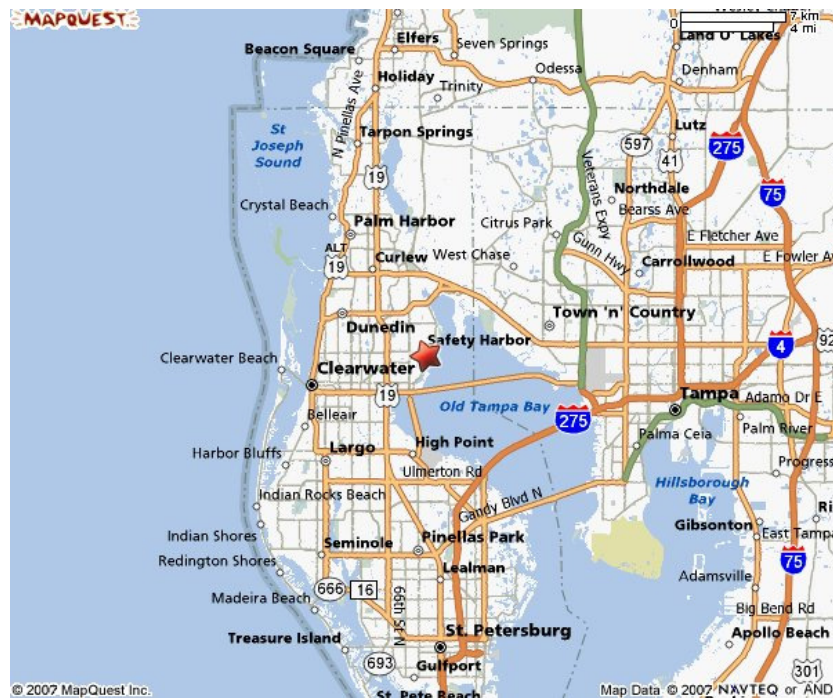
Meanwhile, Kelsang Sanden, the resident Buddhist monk at the Parbawatiya Buddhist Center, posed for a photograph alongside the new Temple's innovative walls,

"The old building and new building are not different in outside appearance," he said. "In fact, the new meditation hall looks like any other residential building. But it's the inside that makes all the difference."

Platinum Advanced Technologies, formed in 2004, with headquarters in St. Petersburg and with manufacturing facilities in Slocomb, near Dothan, AL, serves both residential and light commercial markets. The company's product line includes Platinum Ultimate™ and Platinum Performance™ wall products. Also, its Ultimate product serves as structural and insulation components for roofs and ceilings.



*Safety Harbor is on the west coast of Florida, just north of St. Petersburg, directly on Old Tampa Bay. R-value is the measurement of a material's resistance to heat flow. The higher the R-value number, the more the material insulates.*



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