

Willis Tower goes solar

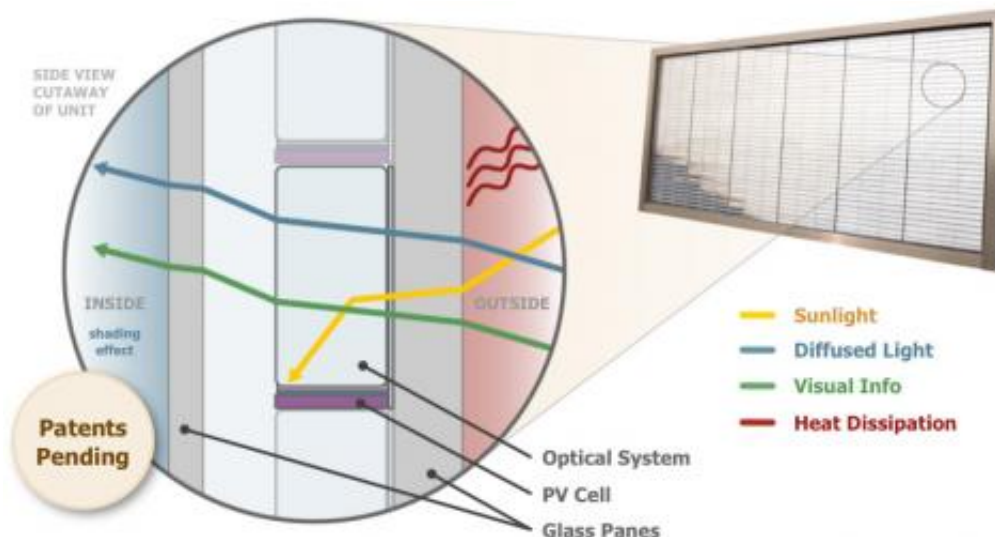
March 22 2011, by Katie Gatto



(PhysOrg.com) -- Do you know the Sears Tower? No, no you don't because for some time now it has been going by the much less famous name of the Willis Tower. While that bit of information may not be news to you, especially if you happen to live in the windy city, this next bit will be. The Willis Tower is going solar. Well, at least in a limited capacity.

A pilot project is taking place on the 56th floor of the Willis Tower. The standard glass on the south side windows on the building will be removed and replaced with a special photovoltaic glass called [Pythagoras Solar's](#) transparent solar windows.

The panels are unique because, unlike other [solar panels](#) that lay horizontally, these transparent solar windows makes use of the free space on the side of skyscrapers. The Pythagorus Solar's solar windows are a type of photovoltaic glass that allow diffused light to enter the building, as it would normally, but also uses a prism to reflect sunlight down onto a horizontally hanging PV cell that sits at the bottom of the unit. This system can generate about as much solar power as a standard rooftop-mounted solar cell. Because they diffuse light, the panels will also reduce the amount of heat that comes into the building, and reduce the cooling costs, at least for this floor.



If all goes well the project could expand to the rest of the tower. When you consider that the [building](#) has enough space to house the equivalent of a 10 acre [solar power plant](#), that is nothing to scoff at.

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