WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A frame for a laser processing module, comprising:

a platform having an upper surface and a lower surface;

an optics bridge for supporting a laser source spaced apart from, and extending over, the upper surface of the platform; and

a bridge support interposed between, and coupled to, the platform and the optics bridge,

wherein at least one selected from the group consisting of the platform and the optics bridge includes a sandwich panel, wherein the sandwich panel includes:

a first plate;

a second plate;

a core interposed within an interior of the sandwich panel and between the first plate and the second plate, wherein the first plate and the second plate are indirectly attached to one another by the core;

at least one channel extending between the first plate and the second plate within the interior of the sandwich panel;

a first port or opening formed at an exterior of the sandwich panel and in fluid communication with the at least one channel; and

a second port or opening formed at the exterior of the sandwich panel and in fluid communication with the at least one channel.

2. The frame of claim 1, wherein the core includes at least one plate.

3. The frame of claim 1, wherein the at least one channel includes a tube, and wherein the tube extends from the first port to the second port such that an interior of the tube is not in fluid communication with the interior of the sandwich panel.

4. The frame of claim 3, wherein the platform includes the sandwich panel and wherein the sandwich panel further includes an exterior wall extending from the first plate to the second plate,

wherein the first port or opening is located in the first plate and the second port or opening is located in the exterior wall.

5. The frame of claim 3,

wherein the optics bridge includes an optics table and an optics wall, wherein a surface defined by the optics table is not parallel to a surface defined by the optics wall,

wherein the optics bridge includes the sandwich panel and further includes an exterior wall extending from the first plate to the second plate, and

wherein the first port is located in the first plate and the second port is located in the exterior wall.

6. The frame of claim 5, wherein the optics table is formed from the second plate.

~~7. The frame of claim 6, wherein the optics wall is formed from the second plate.~~

~~8~~7. The frame of claim 1, wherein the optics bridge includes the sandwich panel, the frame further comprising:

a tube external to the optics bridge, wherein an interior of the tube is in fluid communication with the interior of the sandwich panel.

~~9~~8. The frame of claim ~~8~~7, wherein the tube is integrated within the bridge support.

~~10~~9. The frame of claim 1, further comprising a purge system including at least one purge outlet and at least one purge tube operative to convey fluid to the at least one purge outlet, wherein the bridge support includes the sandwich panel and wherein the at least one purge tube is integrated within the bridge support.

~~11~~10. The frame of claim 1, further comprising a purge system including at least one purge outlet and at least one purge tube operative to convey fluid to the at least one purge outlet, wherein the optics bridge includes the sandwich panel and wherein the at least one purge tube extends through the optics bridge.

~~12~~11. The frame of claim 5, wherein the frame does not include any material selected from the group consisting of granite, diabase, and concrete.

~~13~~12. A laser processing module for processing a workpiece, the module comprising:

a frame provided according to any one of claims 1 to ~~11~~10;

a laser source operative to generate a beam of laser energy, the laser source being supported by the optics bridge; and

a motion stage supported by the platform, wherein the motion stage is configured to move the workpiece relative to the platform.

~~14~~13. The module of claim ~~13~~12, wherein the laser source is a carbon dioxide laser.

~~15~~14. The module of claim ~~14~~13, wherein the carbon dioxide laser is operative to generate a ~~laser~~ beam of laser energy having an average power of 200W or greater.

~~16~~15. The module of claim ~~15~~14, further comprising:

a door shroud ~~shroud door~~ attached to the optics bridge; and

wherein the door shroud ~~shroud door~~ and the optics bridge partially define an optics bay within which the laser source can be supported,

wherein the door shroud ~~shroud door~~ can be opened and closed, and

wherein, when the door shroud ~~shroud door and second door are~~ is opened and the frame is supported on a surface, the laser source is accessible to a user standing on the surface.

~~17~~16. The module of claim ~~16~~15, wherein the laser is an ultraviolet laser.

~~18~~17. The module of claim ~~16~~15, wherein the frame is provided according to claim 5, wherein the laser source is supported by the optics table of the optics bridge, the module further comprising:

a positioner operative to move the beam of laser energy relative to the workpiece,

wherein the positioner is supported by the optics wall of the optics bridge.

~~19~~18. The module of claim ~~13~~12, wherein the frame is provided according to claim 5, wherein the optics bridge further comprises a process wall opposite the optics wall and an optics port extending through the optics bridge from the process wall to the optics wall, the module further comprising:

at least one optical component supported by the process wall.

~~20~~19. The module of claim ~~19~~18, further comprising:

a shroud attached to the optics bridge and the platform;

a first door shroud attached to the shroud; and

a second door shroud aligned to the first door shroud and attached to the frame at a location below the platform,

wherein the shroud, first door shroud, optics bridge and platform define a process bay within which the workpiece can be supported during processing,

wherein the first door shroud and second door shroud can be opened and closed, and

wherein, when the first door shroud and second door shroud are opened, the at least one optical component is accessible to a user.

~~21~~20. The frame of claim 2, wherein the at least one first plate is perforated.

~~22~~21. The frame of claim 1, wherein the first port or opening is formed in the first plate and wherein the interior of the sandwich panel is in fluid communication with a region external to the sandwich panel through the first port or opening.