

E-waste recycler building Kyle plant, could create 180 jobs in next two years

By [Kirk Ladendorf](#)

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Wednesday, Dec. 21, 2011

<http://www.statesman.com/business/e-waste-recycler-building-kyle-plant-could-create-2046486.html>

Image Microsystems, an Austin-based electronic-waste recycling company, said Wednesday that it plans to build a new plant in Kyle to turn e-waste into the substrate material for street and highway signs. The plant could create more than 180 jobs in the next two years, the company said.

The company is renovating a former Palm Harbor Homes manufacturing site at 3700 Kyle Crossing and turning it into the first manufacturing plant for MicroStrate, its patent-pending rugged plastic sign material.

Liz Walker, the company's vice president of marketing and business development, said it has won incentives from both the City of Kyle and Hays County to rebate property taxes on new equipment and sales taxes generated from the plant for five years. She said the company does not yet have an estimate of the value for those incentives.

In return, the company has agreed to create 131 full-time jobs next year and 50 more jobs in 2013. The company also has agreed to invest at least \$3.4 million in property improvements and new equipment at the plant.

"Image Microsystems not only brings quality jobs into Kyle, but also brings in a company with a strong sense of community and a commitment to the environment," Kyle Mayor Lucy Johnson said in announcing the city's agreement with the company.

Walker said the company collaborated with Texas Tech University to create a material that costs less than aluminum and meets the requirements of 3M Co., which is the largest supplier of specialized sheeting that contains the printed images for street signs.

Walker, who joined the company less than three years ago to find a market for its recycled e-waste, said the new project stemmed from a conversation with officials from the Texas Department of Transportation, who told her of the need for a cheaper, greener alternative to aluminum.

About 11 million new stop signs are replaced every year in the U.S., Walker said, and part of the problem is that criminals are stealing street signs for the money they can make from selling the aluminum.

"Our material is superior to aluminum, it costs 30 percent less than aluminum, and people won't steal it because it isn't aluminum," Walker said.

The company said it already has purchase commitments from customers that equal the expected first year of production from the new plant.

kladendorf@statesman.com; 445-3622