As you enter the city limits of West Point, Kia Parkway looms prominently in the landscape, underscoring the fact that the powerhouse Korean auto manufacturer, Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia, Inc., calls West Point home. Indeed, this Georgia community is the only locale in North America where Kia builds automobiles. Since its arrival in 2009, Kia has turned West Point into a manufacturing hub. Five of Kia’s essential vendors have built supply facilities on the expansive manufacturing campus surrounding the impressive Kia plant, and the result is a well-oiled machine of synergy focused on productivity and efficiency.

Automobiles, however, are not the only global product created in West Point. Interface Inc., the world’s foremost manufacturer of carpet tile, has facilities here as well and is a major employer and utility customer of the community. Interface is a leader in sustainability, with a corporatwide focus on reducing its environmental footprint. West Point’s reliable, competitive electricity helps them achieve this goal. Sixty-three percent of the city’s delivered power is emission-free.

Plus, there is more to West Point than manufacturing. ITC Security Partners LLC, an expert security services provider for business, is expanding its existing West Point facility by 10,000 square feet to accommodate the company’s headquarters. ITC announced in 2015 that it would locate its headquarters in West Point and create 90 professional jobs over the next three years. The result will be even more power in a city that is already known for its powerhouse enterprises.
**FAST FACTS**

**WEST POINT**

**POPULATION:** 3,701; Troup County: 67,004

**UTILITIES:** Electricity, gas, water/sewer

**TRANSPORTATION:** Located on two exits of I-85. Other highways that run through the city include U.S. Route 29 and Georgia State Routes 18 and 103.

**NOTABLE EMPLOYERS:**
- Daehan Solution Georgia, LLC – automotive parts manufacturer
- Hyundai Dymos Georgia – automotive parts manufacturer
- Interface, Inc. – carpet tile
- ITC Security Partners, LLC – security services provider
- Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia, Inc. – automotive manufacturer
- Mobis of Alabama, LLC – automotive parts manufacturer
- Point University – higher education
- Powertech America – automotive parts manufacturer

“To a person, regardless of political leanings, our City Council has adopted a servant mentality when it comes to the needs of our community.”

– Mayor Drew Ferguson

- In the last decade, downtown West Point has added 40-plus new businesses and created 300 new jobs.

- West Point was a Civil War battleground. On April 16, 1865, Union troops attacked the earthen fort in West Point. Many soldiers lost their lives, unaware that General Lee had surrendered to Union leader Grant seven days earlier.

- West Point was Georgia’s westernmost terminus on the rail line connecting to Atlanta, or East Point, specifically. Beginning circa 1855, the East Point to Montgomery, Alabama, route operated for more than 100 years, until the Amtrak era began in 1970.
BIG IS NOT NEW IN WEST POINT

West Point is a small city at the westernmost point of Georgia, sitting near the Georgia/Alabama line and about 80 miles southwest of Atlanta. The population is fewer than 4,000 people.

While West Point is small in size, it has always fostered a large economy, not once but twice; first for the textile industry and then Kia with its tsunami of economic promise.

The cotton textile industry came to the region, located in the valley of the Chattahoochee River, in 1866, shortly after the end of the Civil War. These mills were the predecessors of what would become a textile mammoth, West Point Manufacturing Company, which incorporated in 1880. By 1954, West Point Manufacturing Company grew to include 12,000 employees, with annual sales of more than $125 million. The business morphed into the equally successful WestPoint Stevens, one of the nation’s top producers of towels. When the textile industry ultimately moved offshore to global markets, a merger that combined America’s three oldest textile companies from Massachusetts, Maine and Georgia retained a nod to its West Point heritage in its moniker, WestPoint Home, Inc.

Like the textile industry more than one hundred years prior, in 2009 the Korean-based company, Kia Motors, found the Chattahoochee Valley a prime location for the production of their Optima, Sorento and Hyundai Santa Fe models. Since the site became fully operational in 2011, the many benefits of their presence have become apparent, as the plant and its associated suppliers employ approximately 5,000 locals and 12,000 regionally, making it one of Georgia’s most impressive stories of economic success.

Within less than three years of beginning production, Kia announced the production of its one-millionth car at the West Point site in the summer of 2013. With a capacity of 360,000 vehicles a year, the West Point plant can produce 33 percent more in volume than other American manufacturers, which typically have a capacity of 240,000.

Kia statistics are hefty on every measure: production output, employee counts and sales revenue, but there is more. The positive economic trends in this little town also drive big ideas among the community’s leadership.

Through a local SPLOST, citizens supported a $6 million expansion of its city park to include soccer, baseball and softball fields as well as tennis courts, all of which are certified by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. The field upgrades provided high-quality facilities for recreation programs for all ages and ensured the venues were ready for collegiate play for newcomer Point University. In 2012, Point University, formerly Atlanta Christian College, moved its campus to West Point. With it came faculty and 700 students, along with their spending power.

Neighborhood redevelopment is high on the radar of the Mayor and City Council. The council created a state-approved Opportunity Zone around the 10th Street corridor, which allows for generous tax incentives. To further sweeten the deal, the city set aside funds to close potential financing gaps for investments. The Forward Fund is a low-interest loan program the council hopes will be self-sustaining for ongoing projects.

To capitalize on the recreational potential of the Chattahoochee River, city public works and utility buildings that once fronted the river edge have been dispersed to other parts of the city, and a downtown river park is on the drawing board. It will include an amphitheater, green space and other amenities. The new park space should be complete by late summer 2015.

“The Troup County Center for Strategic Planning is a unique initiative to get the best local minds in the room to define actions for future progress,” explains Mayor Drew Ferguson.

Once a month the heads of school systems, local government, health care and business tackle key issues. One of the group’s first accomplishments was a website resource for job seekers when Kia first arrived. Most recently the group supported the launch of the Career and College Academy, a program that fast-track high school students with dual enrollment in high school and higher education.

Big is big in West Point, and leadership seems to have its arms around the sheer expanse of it. Sales and property tax receipts are rising, the workforce is getting prepared, and the sense of optimism is, well, huge.
More About HOMETOWN
WEST POINT

- Fishing is the most popular activity on West Point Lake, a 40-square-mile body of water with a dozen creeks for exploring.

- The city, along with The Trust for Public Land, has preserved over 300 acres of forested land along the Chattahoochee River for passive recreation use.

- The renovated Railroad Depot has become an event center for a variety of activities.

- A new 80-unit apartment complex will provide the city with much-needed affordable housing.

- Soy lattes and gluten-free pizza are standard fare in the diverse local eateries.