

Quarterly Client Letter | 2Q 2022 Verity Recap & 3Q 2022 Outlook

Perspective is Everything

One of the reasons I was drawn to advising clients and investing as a career was the markets. They are constantly changing, always in flux, and usually unpredictable which makes them incredibly interesting to me. The first half of 2022 has been full of each of these characteristics on an amplified basis. This is the type of market where advisors, must earn their fees. Keeping clients invested and focused on long-term goals and timelines during major market declines is one of our biggest value-adds. We took diligent steps to adjust the portfolio prior to the Fed raising interest rates by shortening duration (interest-rate sensitivity) in bonds, we side-stepped the FOMO of investing in the FANG+ trade the past couple of years by focusing on quality, durability, and prudently managed companies for U.S. Large-cap stocks. However, despite our best efforts, the market giveth and taketh away as it sees fit with both stocks and bonds moving against us this year. There is however one area of investing that has proven ready for the challenges of the current market environment and that is private (non-publicly traded) investments. These include many areas, but we have homed in specifically on private credit, and private real estate. Companies investing in these areas have created strategies and investment vehicles accessible to more investors than at any time in the past. Previously, we offered these to our highest net-worth clients who were "Qualified Purchasers", but now we have identified opportunities that allow others in lower net-worth categories access to similar investments. Sorry for the blunt segmentation based on assets, these are legal and tax-driven distinguishing requirements, not personal beliefs. Private investments come with trade-offs that may make them less suitable for some investors, such as reduced liquidity, higher management and performance fees, etc. As with all investment decisions, these should be personally assessed to determine fit with your household risk level and if they are in long-term alignment with your financial plan. We welcome conversations with all clients about these investments during your next quarterly review. The pages that follow are a bit of an experiment to provide some thoughtful market commentary and perspective on a quarterly basis. As always, we deeply appreciate your trust and believe it is a privilege to be partners and stewards on your financial journey.

Welcome our newest Verity team member!



It's a great pleasure to welcome Shiv Enakar to the Verity Team! Shiv (like Christmas Eve, as he is known to say) joins us as an advisor, working with younger, wealth-building clients through financial planning and investing. I have dreamed of having Shiv join our team for the past two years and was a catalyst for him to join a local Ameriprise firm until we were ready for him here. I first met Shiv about ten years ago while he was an undergrad student, and we were both attending and serving at a church on Wayne State's campus. He was immediately interested in the wealth management industry, and we shared many discussions about his career opportunities after college. He is a product of the Southeast Michigan mortgage industry, starting at Quicken Loans/Rocket Mortgage before moving to New American Funding. He met his incredible wife Erica in college and the two wed shortly after graduating. A little-known secret, Shiv proposed in our backyard with the help of his friends staging the evening. They now live in the city of Detroit with their bernadoodle, Mosa. Shiv is an excellent option for your younger family and friends looking to create a long-term financial plan. He is a great advocate of starting early with a custom plan to accelerate the growth of wealth and maintain values and priorities while achieving financial goals. Find out more about Shiv, read his story, and learn what drew him to work with clients at Verity by clicking here: <https://veritywp.com/meet-the-team>

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Looking Back at a Rocky First Half of 2022

Financial markets remained unsettled and volatile during the second quarter. The stock market's trend changed multiple times as investors continued to search for direction amid a sea of changing conditions. The S&P 500 finished the second quarter with its worst three-month period since the first quarter of 2020 and worst first half of a calendar year since 1970. This quarter's letter recaps the first half of 2022 and discusses the top investment themes heading into the second half of 2022.

2nd Quarter Sees a Mixture of Old & New Themes

Investors navigated a combination of old and new investment themes during the second quarter. Inflation pressures remained top of mind as the headline CPI accelerated at a more than +8% year-over-year pace during both April and May. In response to persistent inflation, the Federal Reserve (the Fed) continued to tighten monetary policy by raising interest rates at each of the April, May, and June meetings. Like the first quarter, stocks traded lower as the interest rate increases caused investors to dial back their risk-taking appetite.

Multiple new themes also emerged during the second quarter. Several retailers, including Walmart and Target, reported substantial inventory buildups as inflation pressured consumer spending on discretionary items. The retailers warned their profit margins could decline in the coming quarters as they may need to mark down items to clear the excess inventories. From a monetary policy perspective, the Fed supplemented its interest rate increases by starting to shrink its balance sheet. The Fed is opting not to reinvest the proceeds of up to \$30 billion of maturing Treasury securities and up to \$17.5 billion of maturing mortgage-backed securities per month. The decision is another way to decrease the amount of money supply and liquidity.

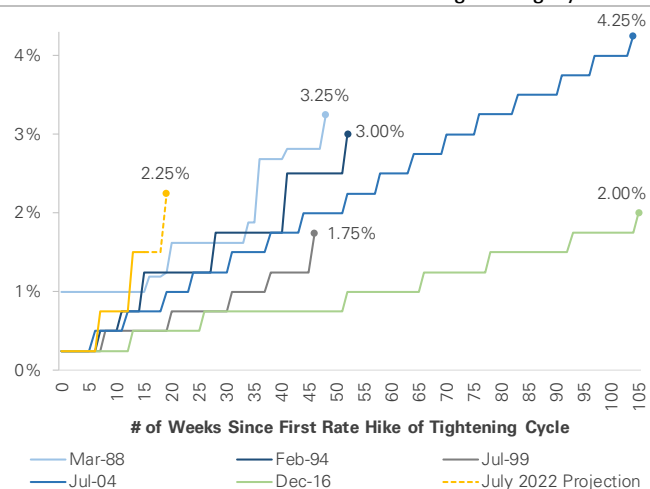
Federal Reserve Gets Aggressive at June Meeting

The Federal Reserve adopted a more aggressive tightening stance at its mid-June meeting. The central bank raised the federal funds rate +0.75% and unveiled a 'strong commitment' to bring inflation back down to 2.0%. For historical context, June was the first +0.75% increase since 1994. The Fed's latest moves are another

indication of how 40-year high inflation readings are driving monetary policy decisions.

How does the current cycle compare to prior cycles? Figure 1 compares the current cycle's federal funds rate path against the last five tightening cycles. Factoring in the +0.75% increase in June, the Fed has raised interest rates +1.50% since the first increase in March. Currently, investors expect the Fed to maintain its +0.75% pace at the late-July meeting, which would make 2022 the fastest +2.25% increase compared to the last five cycles. Market consensus calls for the Fed to keep raising interest rates at its meetings later this year, although the number and size of the increases remain open questions.

FIGURE 1 – Interest Rate Increases Across Tightening Cycles



Source: MarketDesk, Federal Reserve, CME FedWatch Tool. Data as of 6/24/2022. Change in federal funds rates is indexed to zero the week of the first interest rate hike for each tightening cycle.

The June meeting represents a potential turning point. Why? Throughout the first half of 2022, investors were concerned the Fed was not being aggressive enough to combat persistent inflation pressures. The thinking was inflation could become entrenched if the Fed raised rates too slow, which could force the Fed to raise interest rates for a longer period and to a higher endpoint. The June meeting marks a clear conviction to the Fed's actions and indicates the central bank will front-load interest rate hikes if necessary to ease inflation pressures.

Investors initially reacted positively to the Fed's updated guidance. The S&P 500 was down -19.1% from the start of the second quarter through the Fed's meeting on June 16th. From June 16th through June 24th, the S&P 500 gained almost 6.7%, and Treasury yields declined. Why

does this matter? The equity rally and declining Treasury yields suggest investors became slightly more confident the Fed's aggressive tightening upfront could get inflation under control sooner. The quicker inflation is under control, the sooner the Fed may be able to slow its interest rate hikes and evaluate policy more rationally.

To be fair, there is a potential downside to the Fed's new tightening approach, and the market appears to be focused on the risk as the second quarter ends. There isn't a clear understanding of how fast or how much the Fed's actions will impact the economy. There is a risk the impact of the Fed's actions is delayed and the Fed keeps raising interest rates, potentially overtightening and slowing economic activity more than expected over the next 12-18 months. It's a delicate balancing act for the Fed to pull off.

Economic Data Continues to Point to Softer Growth

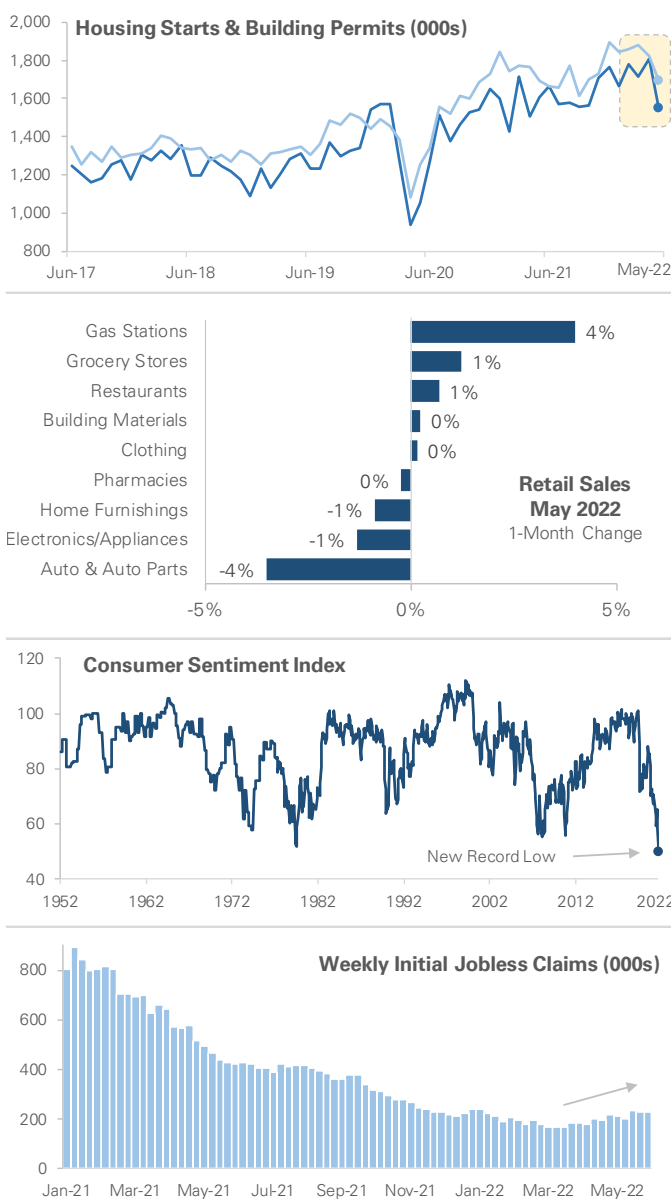
The latest economic data indicates investors are justified in worrying about the Fed overtightening and tipping the U.S. economy into a recession. The stacked charts in Figure 2 track a range of economic indicators across housing, consumer confidence, the labor market, and consumer spending. The data remains strong relative to historical standards, but it does indicate the U.S. economy is starting to soften.

The top chart tracks the annualized pace of housing starts and building permits. Housing demand soared during the pandemic, but both starts and permits have declined more than -10% on an annualized basis since the end of 2021. The housing market slowdown coincides with a more than +2.50% increase in the 30-year fixed mortgage rate since the end of 2021, suggesting rising mortgage rates are already pressuring housing demand.

The second chart tracks month-over-month retail sales growth across multiple categories during May. It shows consumers spent more at gas stations and grocery stores as gasoline and food prices rose and less on discretionary-related goods, such as autos and auto parts, electronics and appliances, and home furnishings. The data offers a near-term look at how high inflation is impacting and shifting consumer spending.

The third chart tracks the University of Michigan's Consumer Sentiment Index. The index made a new record low of 50 during June as consumer sentiment continued to deteriorate. Weaker consumer confidence coincides with high inflation and points to a worried U.S.

FIGURE 2 – U.S. Economic Health Dashboard



Source: MarketDesk, National Association of Realtors, U.S. Census Bureau, University of Michigan, Department of Labor.

consumer, which is concerning because the consumer accounts for nearly 70% of U.S. economic activity.

The fourth chart tracks weekly initial jobless claims. While initial jobless claims remain low by historical standard, the trend has reversed from 2021's steady decline as jobless claims drift higher during 2022. Separate data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows the U.S. continues to add new jobs each month, but the pace of those job gains has slowed significantly compared to 2021. The +390,000 jobs added during May 2022 were the slowest pace since April 2021. The two measures indicate labor demand is softening, a notable change from the last 12 months when businesses struggled to fill open jobs.

Equity Market Recap – Another Difficult Quarter

The second quarter was another difficult environment for equities. The S&P 500 Index lost -16.1%, only slightly outperforming the Russell 2000 Index's -17.3% return. It was an especially difficult quarter for Growth stocks as rising interest rates continued to pressure valuations. The Russell 1000 Growth Index traded down -21.1% and underperformed the Russell 1000 Value Index's -12.3% return. The Nasdaq 100 Index, which investors view as a concentrated Growth index due to its Tech overweight, traded down -22.5% during the second quarter.

U.S. sector returns offer another look at second-quarter performance trends. Energy and defensive sectors, including Consumer Staples, Utilities, and Health Care, outperformed as investors rotated to commodities and risk-off assets. Growth-style sectors, which include Consumer Discretionary, Communication Services, and Technology, underperformed the broad market as rising interest rates pressured Growth stocks. In the middle, cyclical sectors, including Materials, Industrials, and Financials, performed in line with the S&P 500.

International markets' lower exposure to expensive Growth stocks allowed them to outperform U.S. markets during the second quarter. The MSCI EAFE Index of developed market stocks returned -13.1% during the quarter, while the MSCI EM Index of emerging market stocks returned -10.4%. Despite international stocks' outperformance during the second quarter, questions remain about the impact of rising energy prices in Europe and tighter financial conditions in emerging markets (i.e., higher interest rates & lower liquidity).

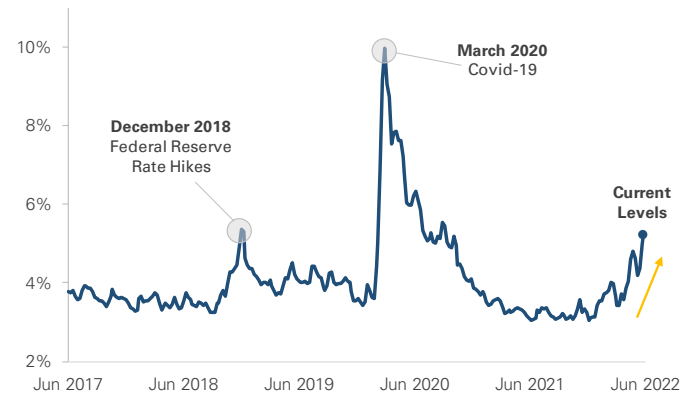
Bond Market Recap – Rising Treasury Yields Lead to Additional Losses

Bonds traded lower during the second quarter as Treasury yields continued to rise in anticipation of tighter Fed policy. Corporate investment-grade bonds produced a -8.4% total return, slightly outperforming the -9.4% total return generated by corporate high yield bonds. While investment-grade bonds outperformed in aggregate during the second quarter, the group's outperformance versus high-yield bonds primarily occurred during the second half of June after the Fed's new aggressive tightening stance caused investors to grow concerned about slower economic activity.

Figure 3 tracks the interest rate spread between corporate high-yield bonds and Treasury bonds. The

spread is a measure of credit risk, more specifically how much more yield investors demand in order to loan to riskier companies. The chart shows the spread widened significantly from 3.40% at the start of the second quarter to 5.26% on June 28th. The wider spread indicates investors are concerned about borrowers' ability to make principal and interest payments as financial conditions tighten. Looking back at the past five years, the 5.26% spread is near levels last seen in late 2020, the months following the Covid outbreak, and late 2018, the last time the Fed raised interest rates.

FIGURE 3 – Corporate High Yield Bond Credit Spread



Source: MarketDesk, Federal Reserve. Data as of 6/28/2022.

Second Half 2022 Outlook – Unanswered Questions

The outlook is indecisive as financial markets close out a volatile first half of the year. Some investors believe the Fed's actions will dramatically slow economic growth and push the U.S. economy into a recession. On the opposite end of the spectrum, some investors believe the U.S. economy is strong enough to withstand the Fed's actions and view the stock market as oversold.

The back and forth is likely to continue until some of the market's most pressing questions are answered. Key questions include the direction of Federal Reserve policy, inflation's stickiness, the trajectory of corporate earnings growth and forward earnings estimates, and the path of economic growth. Our team will be monitoring the answers to these questions in the coming months to help guide investment portfolio positioning.

The current investing environment requires a long-term outlook. Trend changes are frequent, fast, and driven by fluctuating market headlines, and keeping up with the day-to-day whims of the market can be emotionally taxing. Developing a financial plan and sticking to it are important steps to achieving your financial goals.

THIS QUARTER IN NUMBERS

FIGURE 4

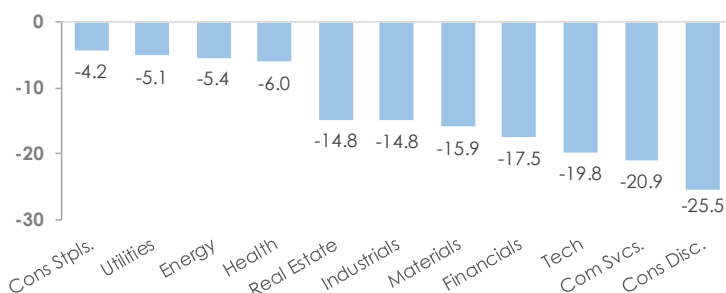
U.S. Style Returns (2Q 2022 in %)

	Value	Blend	Growth
Large	-12.3	-16.1	-21.1
Mid	-14.8	-16.9	-21.1
Small	-15.3	-17.3	-19.2

Data Reflects Most Recently Available As of 6/30/2022

FIGURE 5

U.S. Sector Returns (2Q 2022 in %)



Data Reflects Most Recently Available As of 6/30/2022

FIGURE 6

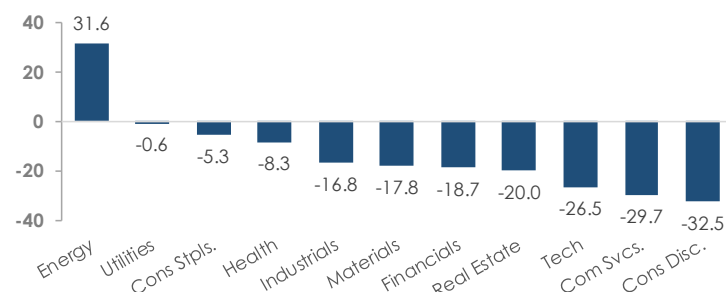
U.S. Style Returns (YTD in %)

	Value	Blend	Growth
Large	-12.9	-20.0	-28.2
Mid	-16.3	-21.6	-31.0
Small	-17.3	-23.5	-29.4

Data Reflects Most Recently Available As of 6/30/2022

FIGURE 7

U.S. Sector Returns (YTD in %)



Data Reflects Most Recently Available As of 6/30/2022

FIGURE 8

Market Data Center

Stocks	Level	1 month	3 months	YTD	1 year	3 years
S&P 500	3,785	-8.3%	-16.1%	-20.0%	-10.5%	34.7%
Dow Jones	30,775	-6.6%	-10.8%	-14.4%	-9.0%	22.4%
Russell 2000	4,245	-8.3%	-17.3%	-23.5%	-25.2%	12.9%
Russell 1000 Growth	1,456	-8.0%	-21.1%	-28.2%	-18.8%	42.0%
Russell 1000 Value	881	-8.7%	-12.3%	-12.9%	-6.8%	20.9%
M SCI EAFE	1,188	-8.6%	-13.1%	-18.7%	-17.0%	4.9%
M SCI EM	59,621	-5.1%	-10.4%	-17.2%	-25.3%	0.5%
NASDAQ 100	11,504	-8.9%	-22.5%	-29.3%	-20.4%	52.9%

Fixed Income	Yield	1 month	3 months	YTD	1 year	3 years
U.S. Aggregate	1.94%	-1.6%	-4.6%	-10.1%	-10.1%	-2.3%
U.S. Corporates	2.75%	-3.6%	-8.4%	-16.0%	-15.9%	-3.2%
Municipals (10 yr)	1.89%	-1.5%	-2.5%	-7.8%	-7.5%	0.2%
High Yield	4.83%	-7.0%	-9.4%	-13.6%	-12.4%	-2.0%

Key Rates	6/30/2022	5/31/2022	3/31/2022	12/31/2021	6/30/2021	6/30/2019
2 yr Treasury	2.93%	2.54%	2.29%	0.73%	0.25%	1.73%
10 yr Treasury	2.98%	2.84%	2.32%	1.51%	1.45%	2.00%
30 yr Treasury	3.12%	3.05%	2.45%	1.90%	2.06%	2.53%
30 yr Fixed Mortgage	5.91%	5.35%	4.90%	3.27%	3.13%	3.80%
Prime Rate	4.75%	4.00%	3.50%	3.25%	3.25%	5.50%

Data Reflects Most Recently Available As of 6/30/2022

Dividend Yield	NTM P/E	P/B
1.59%	15.9x	4.0x
2.00%	15.5x	4.3x
1.32%	17.3x	2.0x
0.76%	21.9x	10.3x
1.98%	13.1x	2.4x
4.82%	12.1x	1.6x
2.73%	11.1x	1.7x
0.67%	19.8x	6.7x

Commodities	Level	1 month	YTD
Oil (WTI)	105.76	-7.8%	40.6%
Gasoline	3.95	0.2%	77.8%
Natural Gas	5.39	-33.8%	51.6%
Propane	1.21	-2.2%	16.5%
Ethanol	2.70	6.5%	10.0%
Gold	1,807	-1.9%	-1.2%
Silver	20.35	-6.2%	-12.8%
Copper	3.71	-13.5%	-16.6%
Steel	880	-26.1%	-38.7%
Corn	6.20	-17.8%	4.5%
Soybeans	17.30	0.5%	31.8%

Disclosures

Information contained herein is derived from and based upon data obtained from an unaffiliated third party. While the information presented in this report has been obtained from a source believed to be reliable and every effort is made to provide reports free from error, due to the possibility of human or technology error by third parties, the data contained herein is not guaranteed as to its accuracy or completeness and no warranties are made with respect to results obtained from its use. Neither the information nor any opinions expressed, constitute a solicitation of the purchase or sale of any security, or related instruments and do not constitute financial advice.

Returns for periods exceeding 12 months are not annualized. **For Figure 8 above:** Note the "Level" corresponds to the underlying index value. The "Total Returns", "Yields", and valuations correspond to the underlying ETF.

S&P 500 Index® is widely regarded as the best single gauge of large-cap U.S. equities. This index includes a representative sample of 500 leading companies in leading industries of the U.S. economy. Although the S&P 500 focuses on the large-cap segment of the market, it covers approximately 80% of the available market capitalization. S&P 500 is represented by the SPDR S&P 500 ETF Trust (SPY).

The Dow Jones Industrial Average® (The Dow®), is a price-weighted measure of 30 U.S. blue-chip companies. This index covers all industries except transportation and utilities. The Dow® is represented by the SPDR Dow Jones Industrial Average ETF Trust (DIA).

The Russell 2000® Index is a small-cap stock market index that makes up the smallest 2,000 stocks in the Russell 3000 Index. The Russell 2000® Index is represented by iShares Russell 2000 ETF (IWM).

The Russell 1000® Growth Index measures the performance of the large-cap growth segment of the US equity universe. The Russell 1000® Growth Index is constructed to provide a comprehensive and unbiased barometer for the large-cap growth segment. The Russell 1000® Growth Index is represented by iShares Russell 1000 Growth ETF (IWF).

The Russell 1000® Value Index measures the performance of the large-cap value segment of the US equity universe. The Russell 1000® Value Index is constructed to provide a comprehensive and unbiased barometer for the large-cap value segment. The Russell 1000® Value Index is represented by iShares Russell 1000 Value ETF (IWD).

The MSCI EAFE® Index is an equity index that captures large and mid-cap representation across 21 Developed Markets countries around the world, excluding the US and Canada. With 825 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in each country. The MSCI EAFE® Index is represented by iShares MSCI EAFE ETF (EFA).

The MSCI Emerging Markets Index captures large and mid-cap representation across 24 Emerging Markets (EM) countries. With 1,398 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in each country. The MSCI Emerging Markets Index is represented by iShares MSCI Emerging Markets ETF (EEM).

The NASDAQ-100 Index includes 100 of the largest domestic and international non-financial companies listed on The NASDAQ Stock Market based on market capitalization. The Index reflects companies across major industry groups including computer hardware and software, telecommunications, retail/wholesale trade and biotechnology. It does not contain securities of financial companies including investment companies. The NASDAQ Composite Index is represented by Invesco QQQ Trust (QQQ).

U.S. Aggregate refers to The Bloomberg Barclays U.S. Aggregate Bond Index which is a broad-based benchmark that measures the investment grade, U.S. dollar-denominated, fixed-rate taxable bond market. This includes Treasuries, government-related and corporate securities, mortgage-backed securities, asset-backed securities and collateralized-mortgage-backed securities. The Bloomberg Barclays U.S. Aggregate Bond Index is represented by iShares Core U.S. Aggregate Bond ETF (AGG).

U.S. Corporates refers to investment-grade corporate bonds and is represented by the iShares iBoxx \$ Investment Grade Corporate Bond ETF (LQD). LQD seeks to track the investment results of an index composed of U.S. dollar-denominated, investment-grade corporate bonds.

Municipals refers to investment-grade municipal bonds throughout the U.S. and is represented by iShares National Muni Bond ETF (MUB). MUB seeks to track the investment results of an index composed of investment-grade U.S. municipal bonds.

High Yield refers to an index of bonds known as high yield, junk, or below-investment-grade and is represented by iShares iBoxx \$ High Yield Corporate Bond ETF (HYG). HYG seeks to track the investment results of an index composed of U.S. dollar-denominated, high-yield corporate bonds.