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DATE: December 14, 2012

FROM: State Board of Investment

**SUBJECT: Report on Investment Consultant Activities**

The provisions of Minnesota Statutes, Section 11A.27 require the State Board of Investment to file with the Legislative Reference Library a report on investment consultant activities.

The State Board of Investment (SBI) contracts with Callan Associates, Chicago, Illinois and Pension Consulting Alliance (PCA), Encino, California for certain investment consulting services. Callan serves as the SBI's general consultant, and PCA serves as the SBI's special projects consultant. The current contracts with these consultants, effective July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2017, call for payment of \$450,000 to Callan annually and \$40,000 to PCA annually.

During the period November 1, 2011 through October 31, 2012, Callan was involved in the following projects:

- Availability to the Board, staff and Investment Advisory Council to provide perspective, counsel and input on relevant investment related issues.
- Periodic background information for evaluating SBI investment manager.

During the period November 1, 2011 through October 31, 2012, PCA was involved in the following projects:

- Availability to staff to provide perspective, counsel and input on relevant investment related issues.

Attached is an example of the work product provided.



# Investment Market Risk Metrics – Sept 2012

Pension Consulting Alliance, Inc.

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## Takeaways

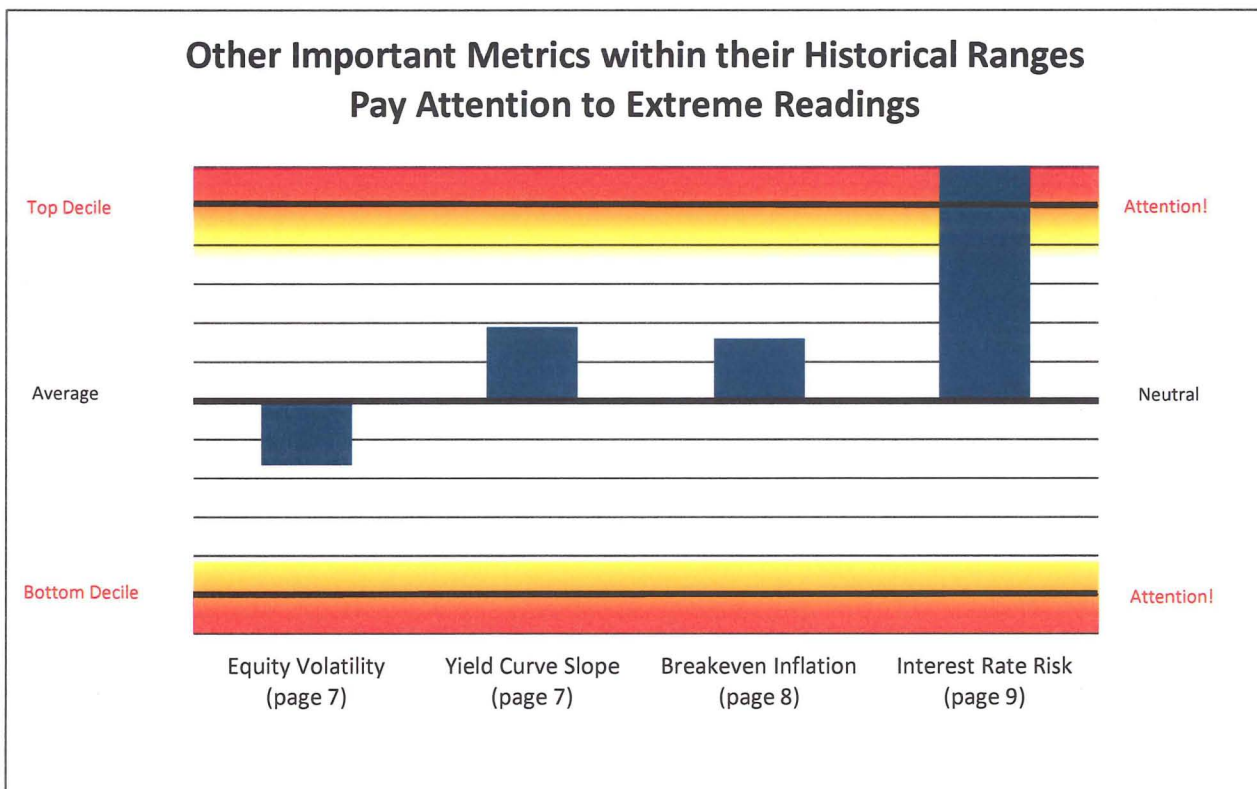
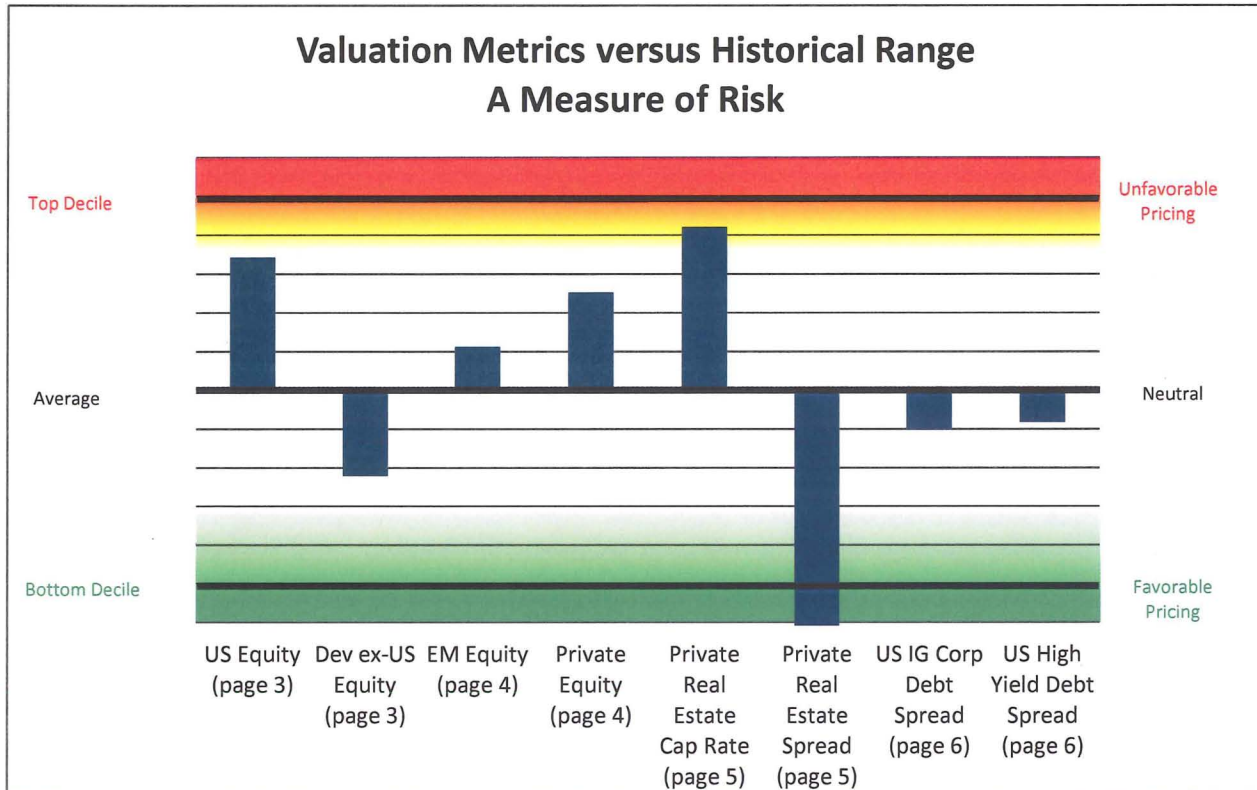
- The PCA Market Sentiment Indicator “PMSI” flipped to “positive” (**green**), indicating positive sentiment. (See page 2)

The positive sentiment indication results from:

1. positive returns to US stocks year-over-year, and
2. narrowing of credit spreads year-over-year.

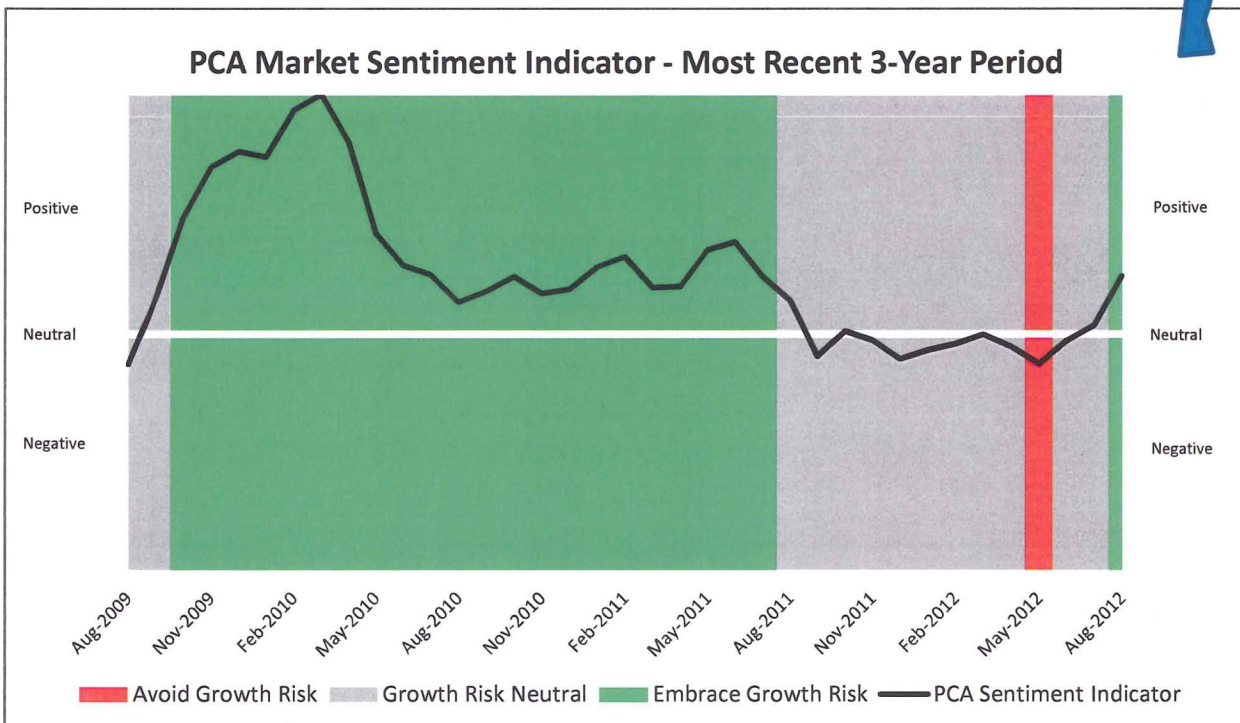
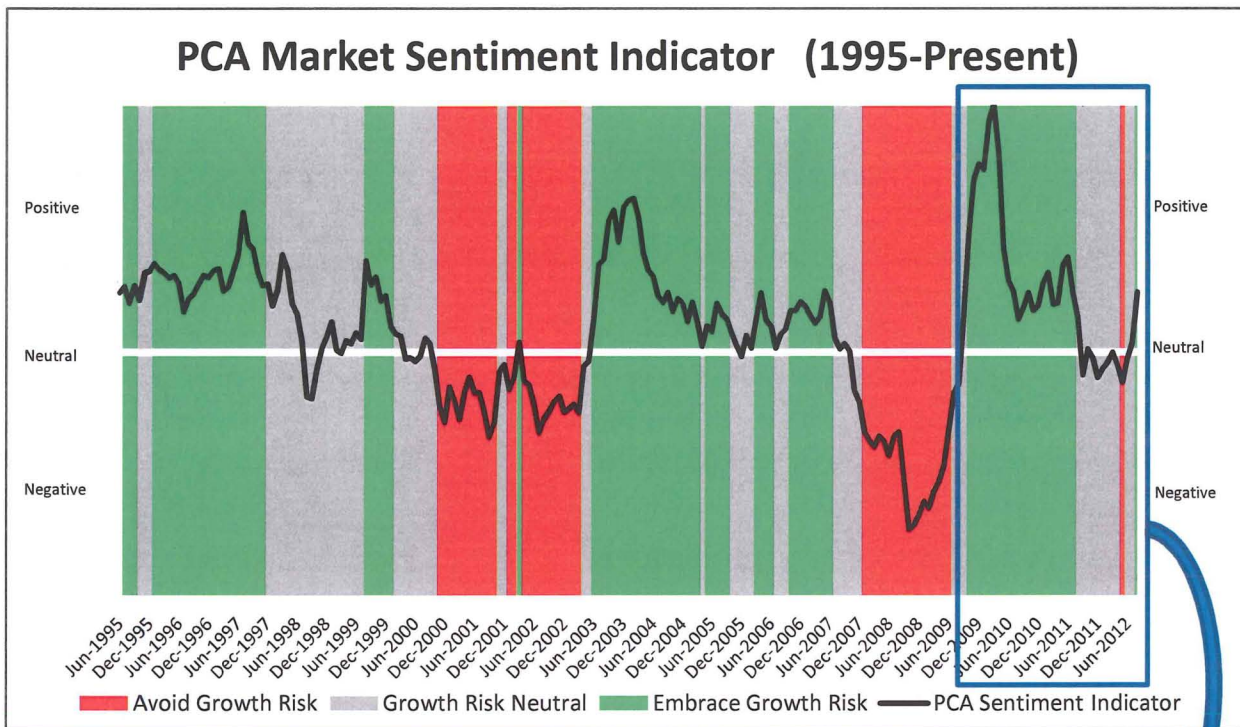
- Interest rate risk remains high, but yields remained low in August:
  - The 10-year Treasury yield held at 1.6%.
  - Bond sensitivity to interest rates (duration) remains at 30 year highs, and real yields are at all time lows (negative out past 20 years for government issues).
- Growth metrics ticked-up in August:
  - Commodity prices rose.
  - Equity market volatility (VIX) remained below average (<20).
  - Equity prices rose and credit spreads narrowed.
  - Valuations of growth exposed assets are cheap relative to bonds, but are only neutral relative to their historical valuations.

## Risk Overview





## Market Sentiment



Bond Spread Momentum Trailing-Twelve Months

Equity Return Momentum Trailing-Twelve Months

Agreement Between Bond Spread and Equity Spread Momentum Measures?

Positive

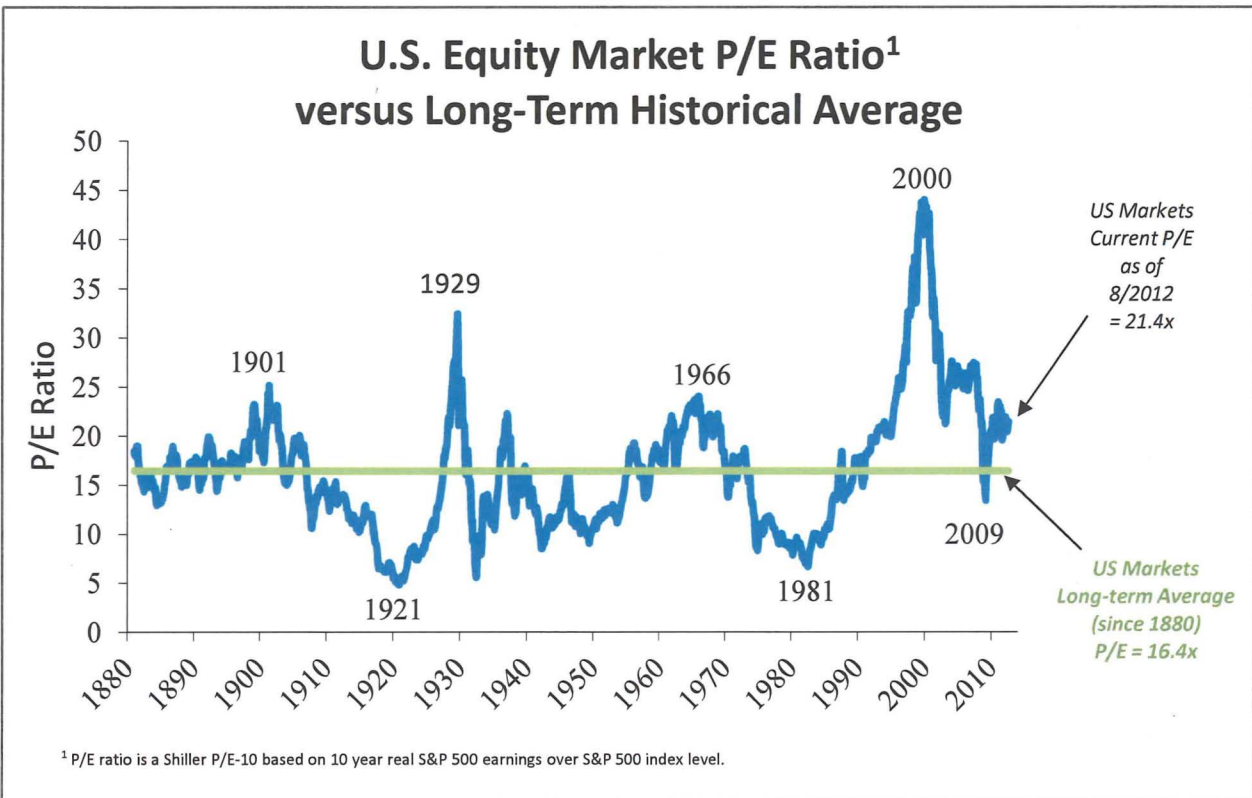
Positive

Agree

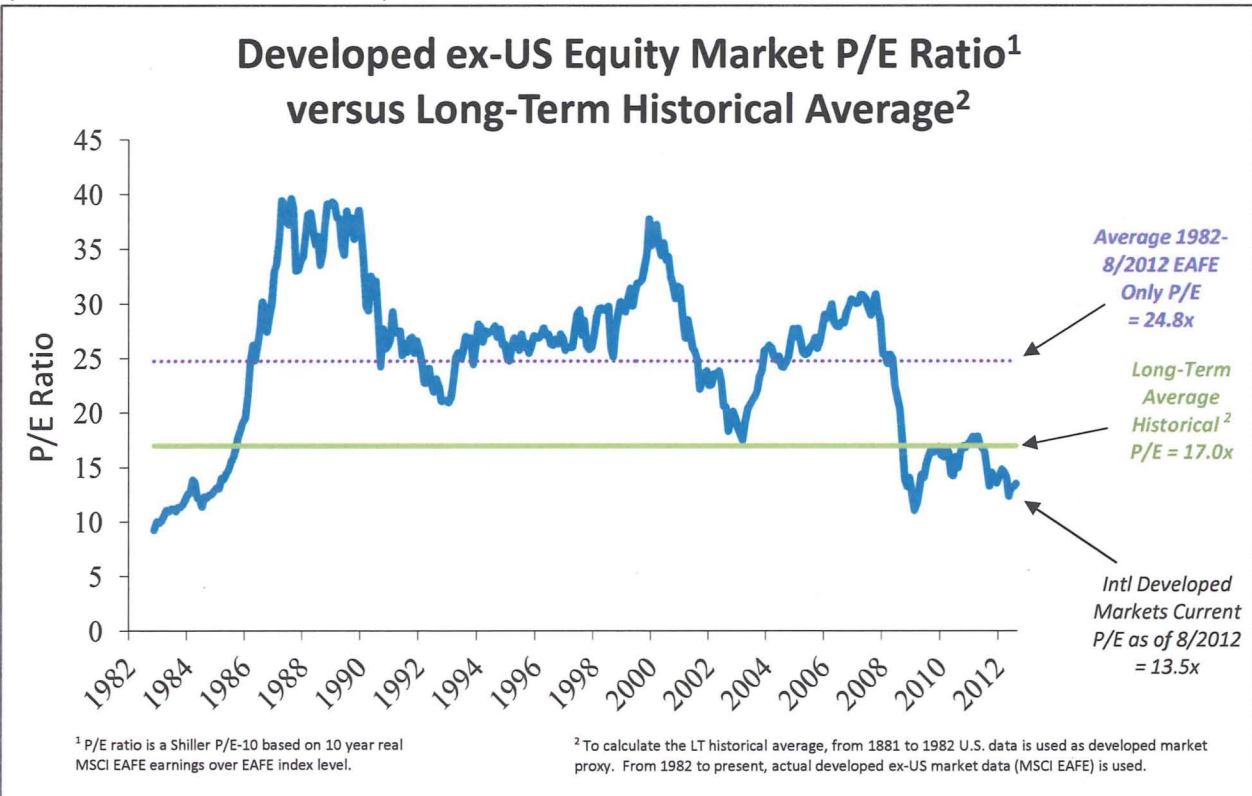
**Growth Risk Visibility (Current Overall Sentiment)**

**Positive**

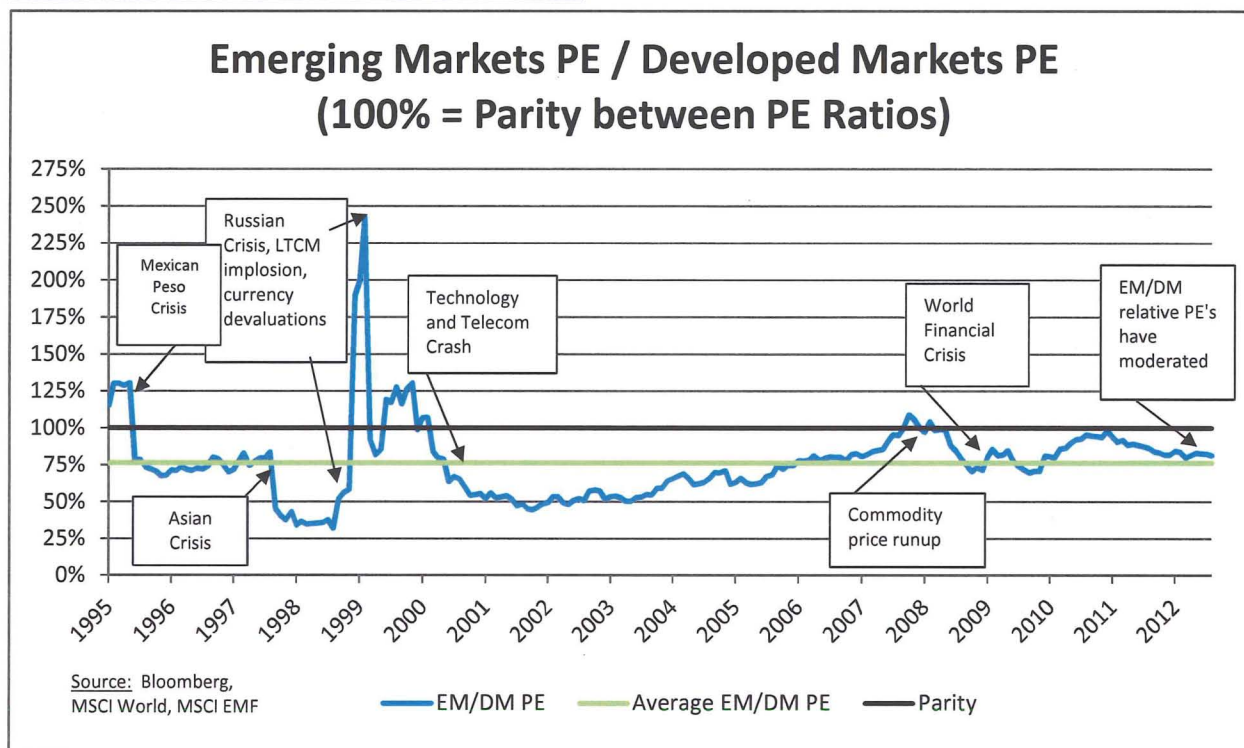
## Developed Public Equity Markets



(Please note the different time scales)

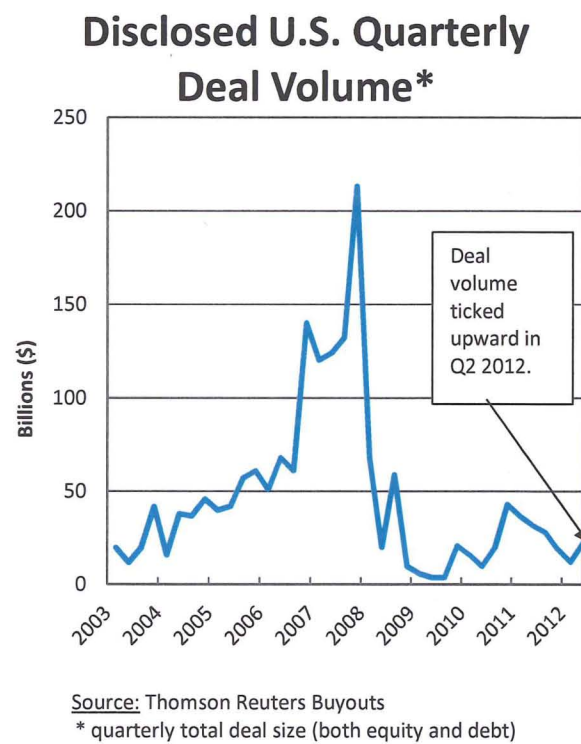
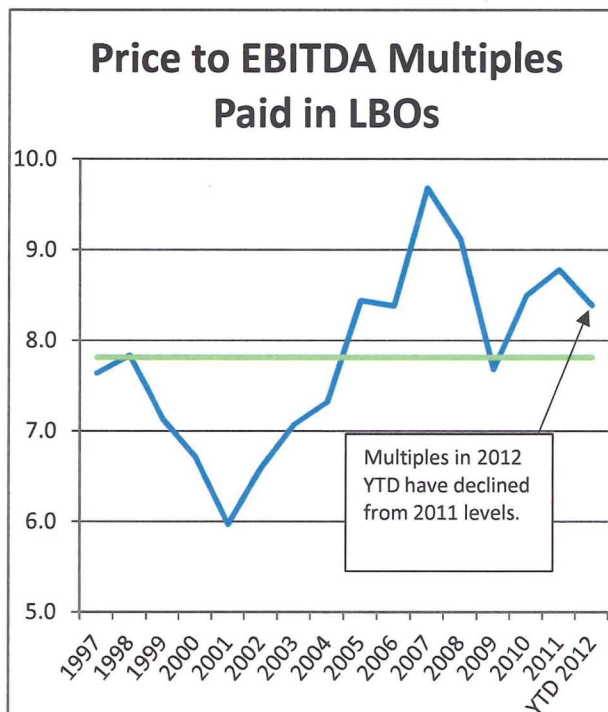


## Emerging Market Public Equity Markets



## US Private Equity

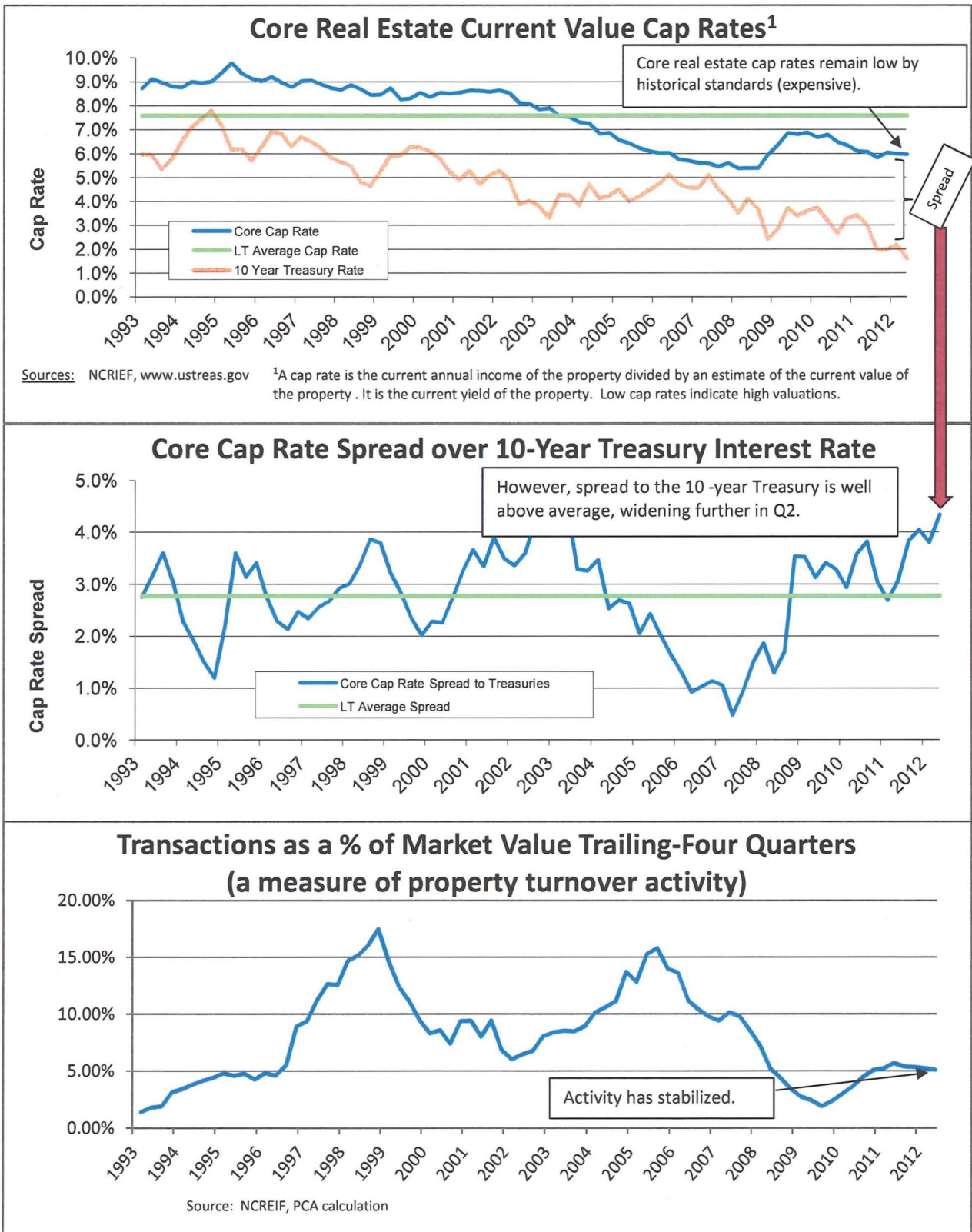
Quarterly Data, Updated to June 30th





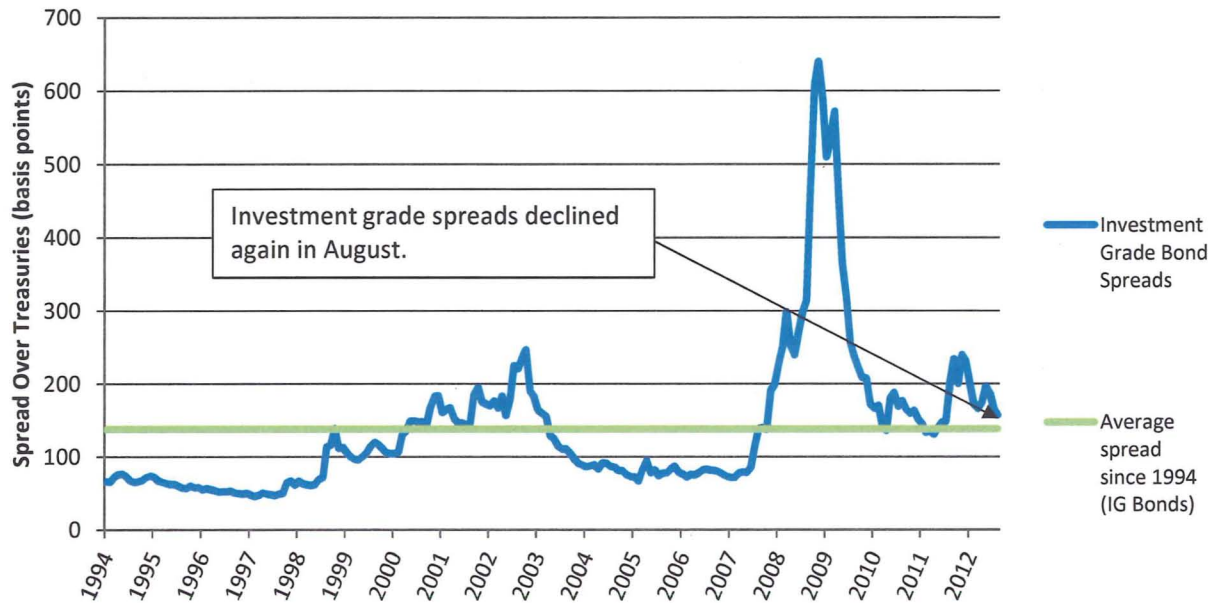
## Private Real Estate Markets

Quarterly Data, Updated to June 30th



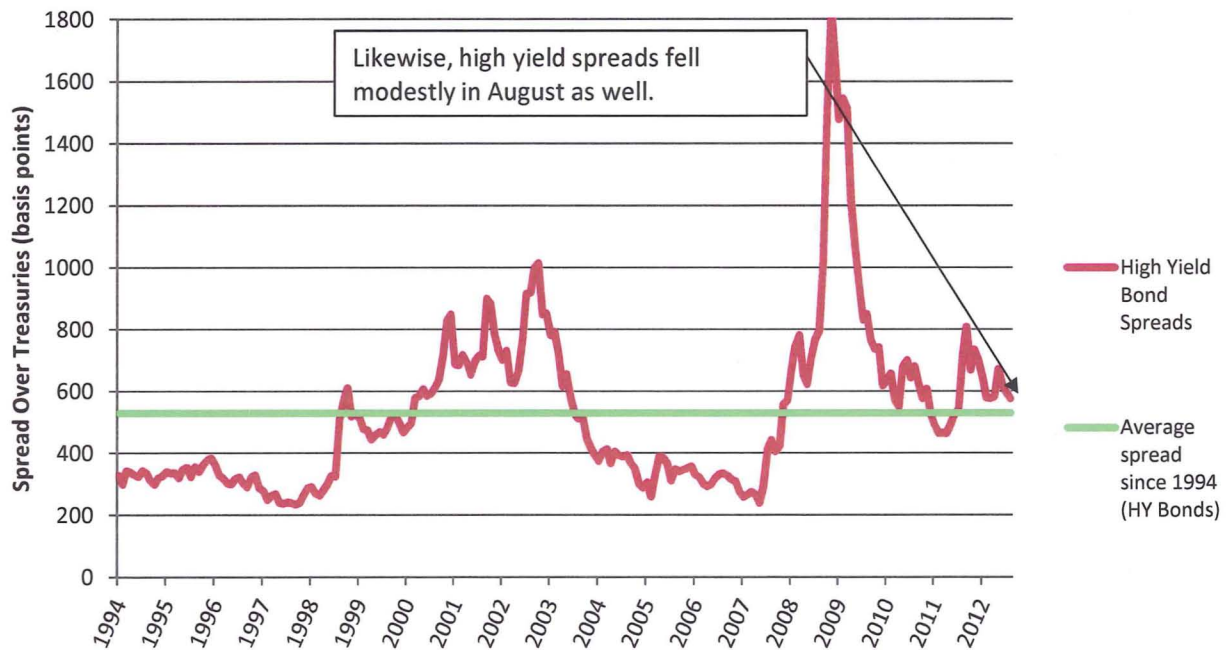
## Credit Markets US Fixed Income

### Investment Grade Corporate Bond Spreads



Source: LehmanLive: Barclays Capital US Corporate Investment Grade Index Intermediate Component.

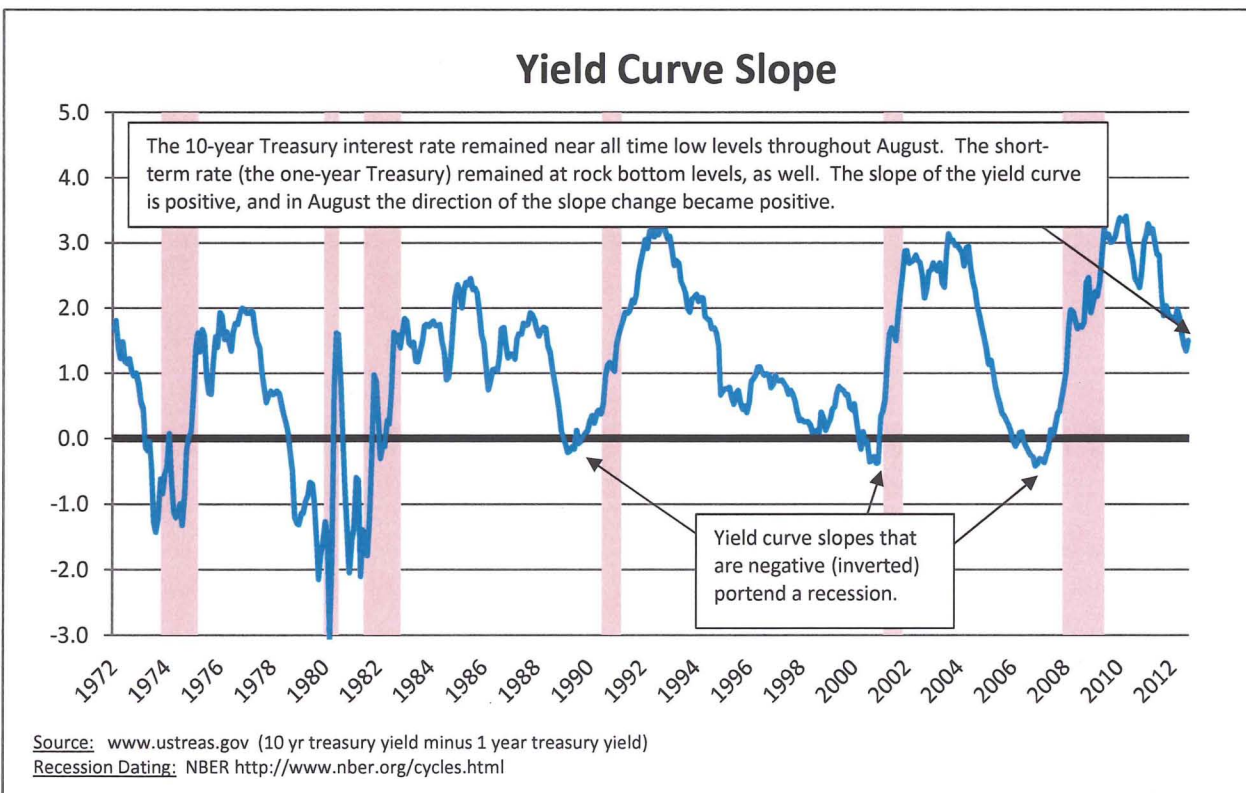
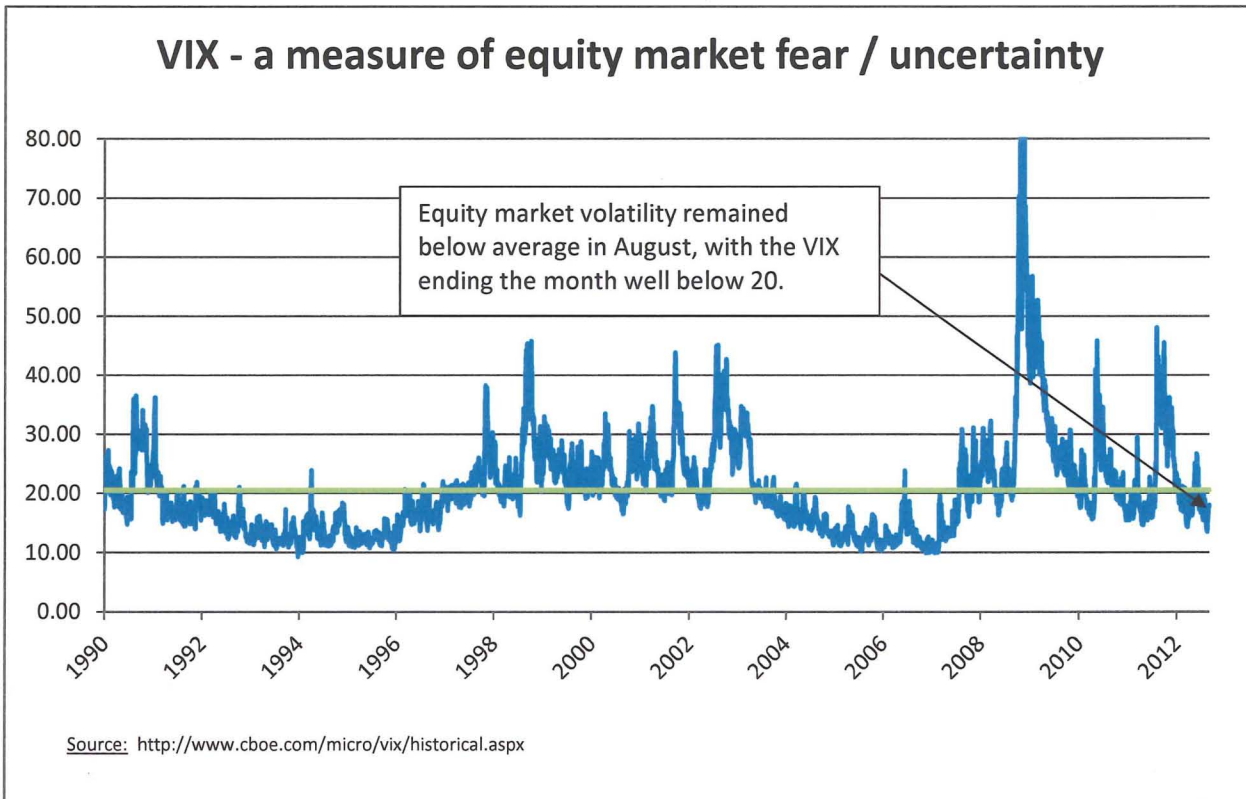
### High Yield Corporate Bond Spreads



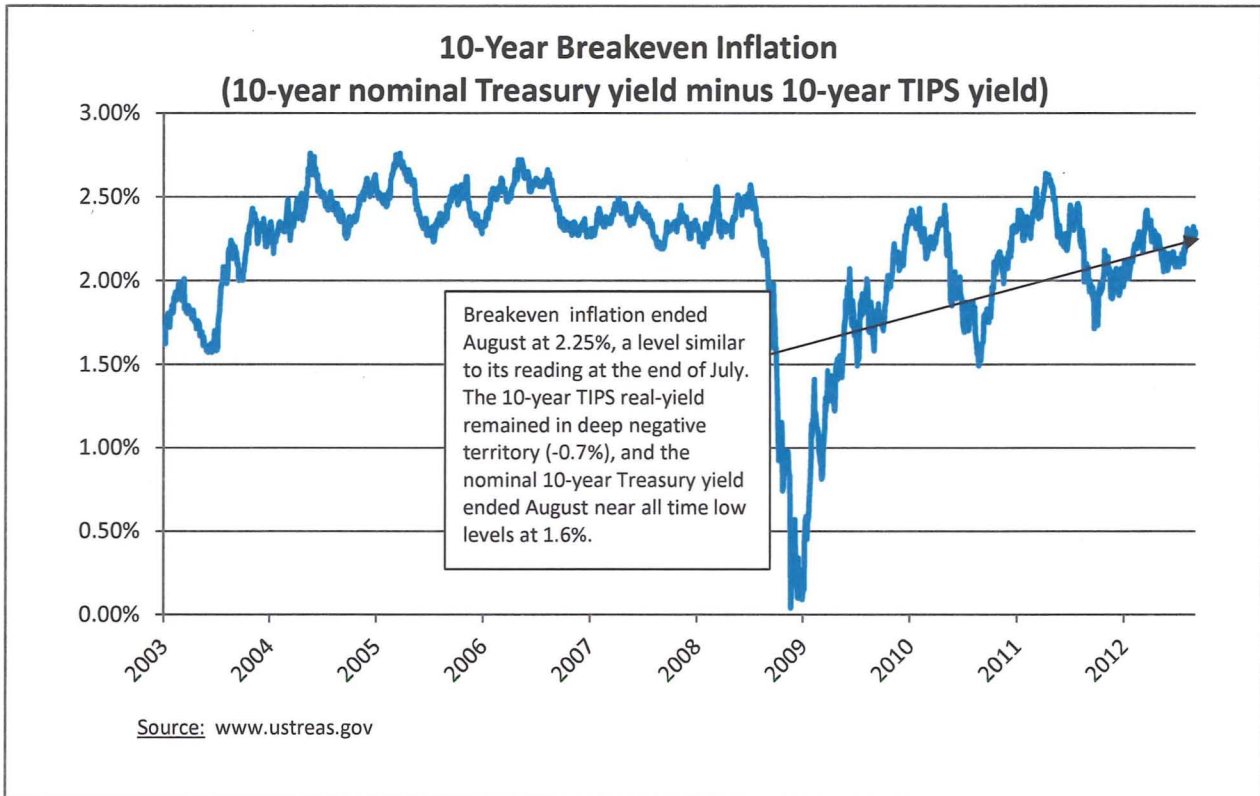
Source: LehmanLive: Barclays Capital U.S. Corporate High Yield Index.



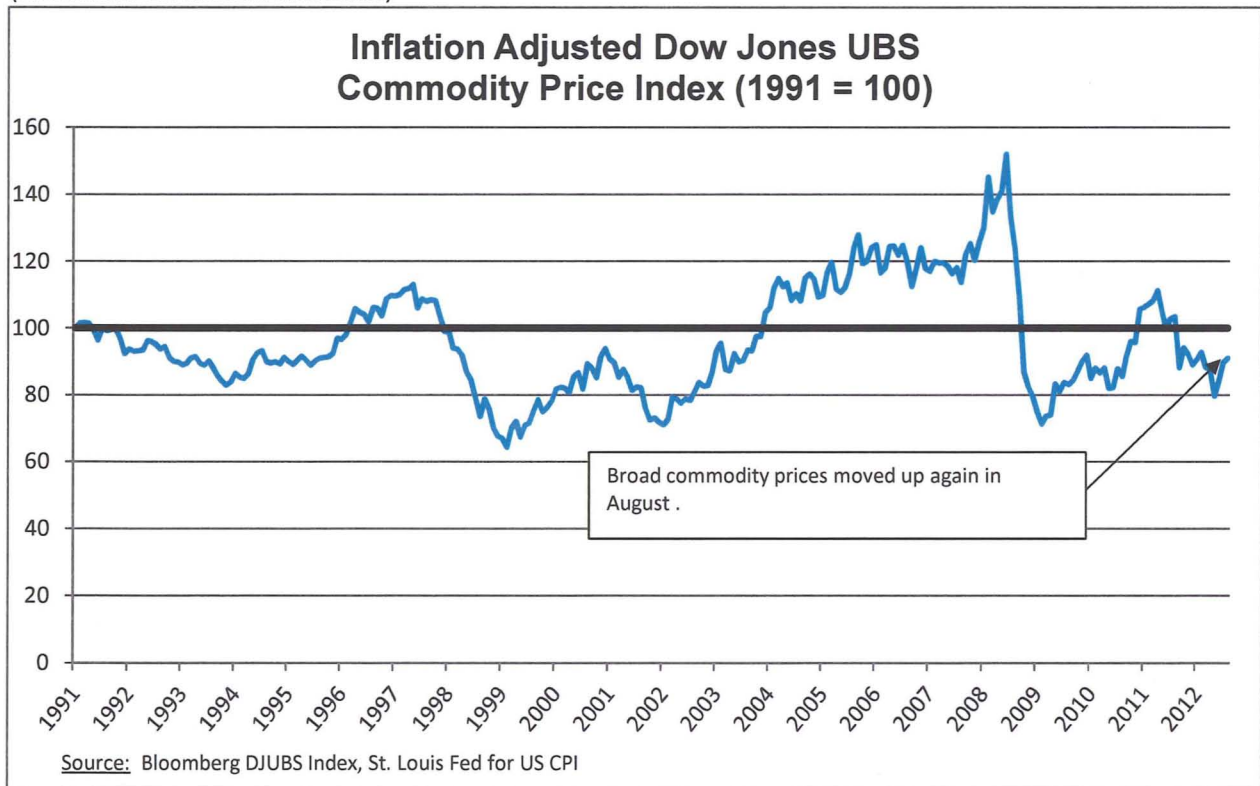
## Other Market Metrics



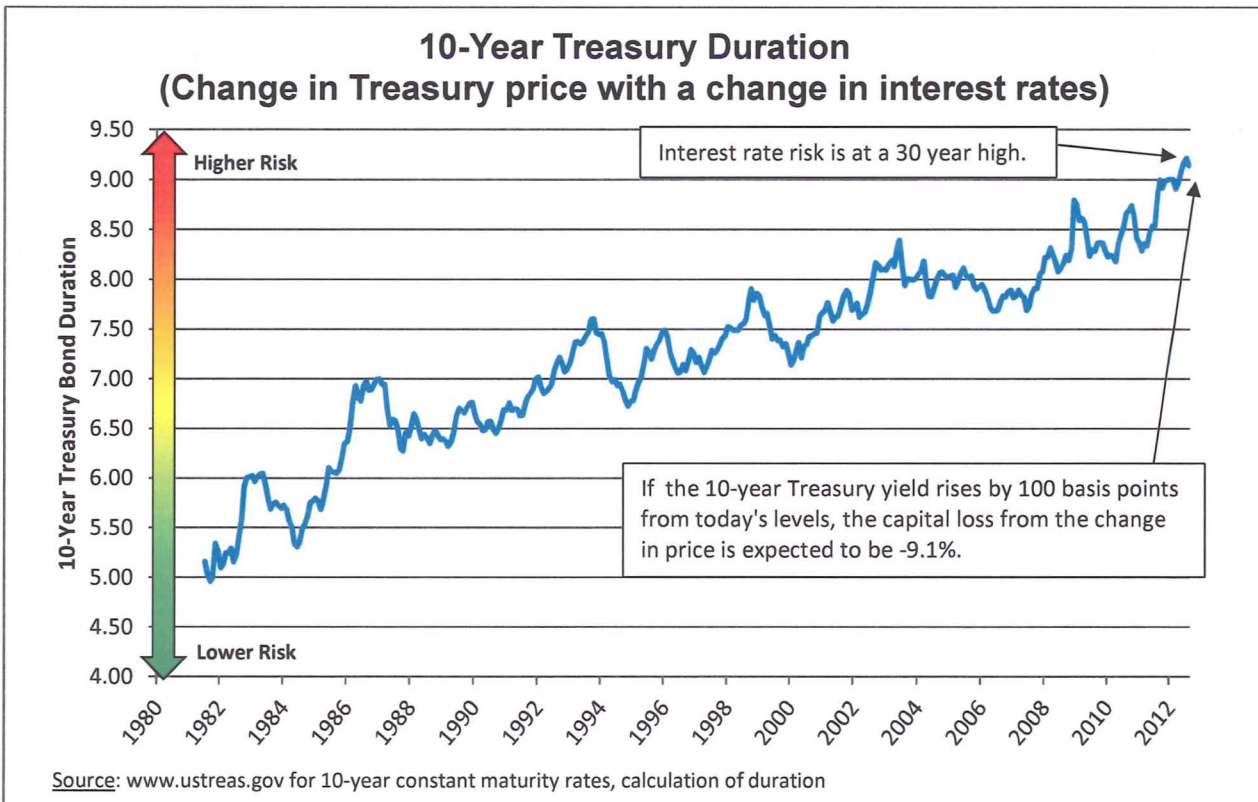
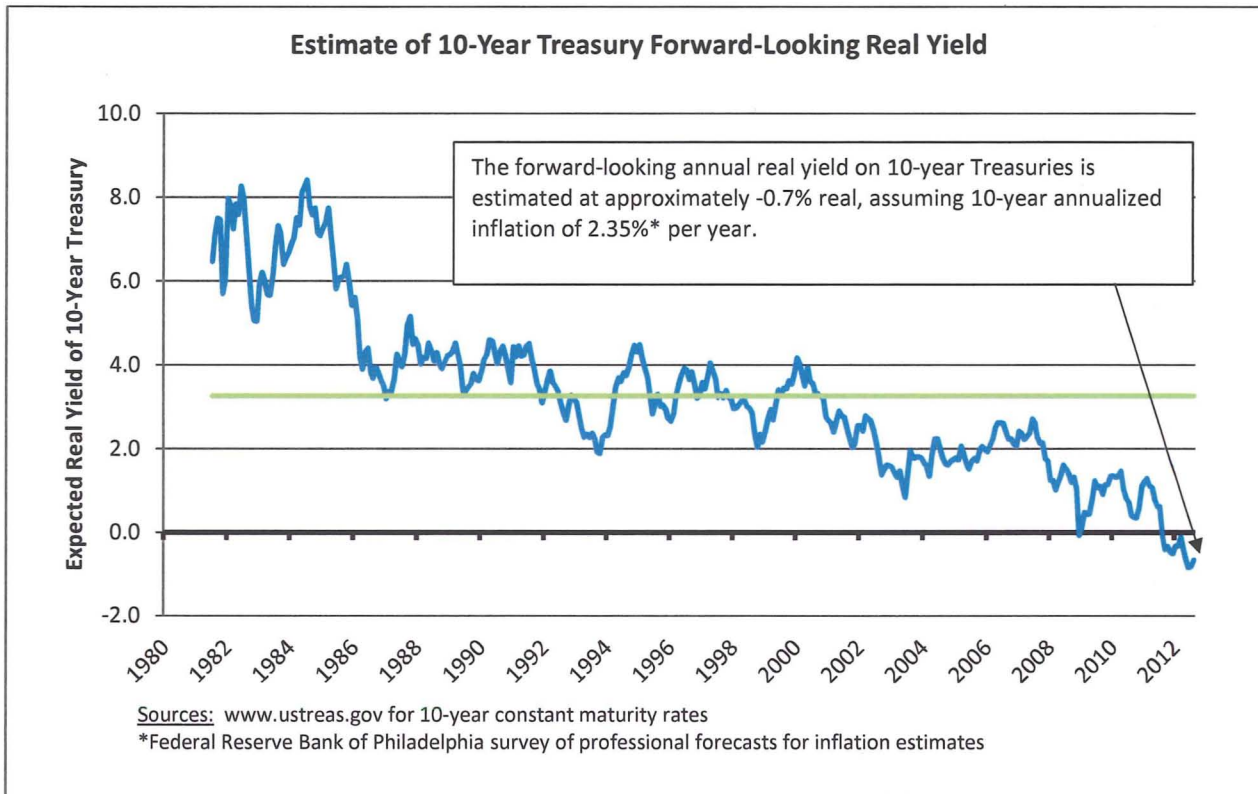
## Measures of Inflation Expectations



(Please note the different time scales)



## Measures of U.S. Treasury Interest Rate Risk





## Metric description, rationale for selection and calculation methodology

### US Equity Markets:

Metric:  $P/E \text{ ratio} = \text{Price} / \text{"Normalized" earnings for the S\&P 500 Index}$

To represent the price of US equity markets, we have chosen the S&P 500 index. This index has the longest published history of price, is well known, and also has reliable, long-term, published quarterly earnings. The price= $P$  of the P/E ratio is the current price of the market index (the average daily price of the most recent full month for the S&P 500 index). Equity markets are very volatile. Prices fluctuate significantly during normal times and extremely during periods of market stress or euphoria. Therefore, developing a measure of earnings power ( $E$ ) which is stable is vitally important, if the measure is to provide insight. While equity prices can and do double, or get cut in half, real earnings power does not change nearly as much. Therefore, we have selected a well known measure of real, stable earnings power developed by Yale Professor Robert Shiller known as the Shiller E-10. The calculation of E-10 is simply the average real annual earnings over the past 10 years. Over 10 years, the earnings shenanigans and boom and bust levels of earnings tend to even out (and often times get restated). Therefore, this earnings statistic gives a reasonably stable, slow-to-change estimate of average real earnings power for the index. Professor Shiller's data and calculation of the E-10 are available on his website at <http://www.econ.yale.edu/~shiller/data.htm>. We have used his data as the base for our calculations. Details of the theoretical justification behind the measure can be found in his book *Irrational Exuberance* [Princeton University Press 2000, Broadway Books 2001, 2nd ed., 2005].

### Developed Equity Markets Excluding the US:

Metric:  $P/E \text{ ratio} = \text{Price} / \text{"Normalized" earnings for the MSCI EAFE Index}$

To represent the price of non-US developed equity markets, we have chosen the MSCI EAFE index. This index has the longest published history of price for non-US developed equities. The price= $P$  of the P/E ratio is the current price of the market index (the average daily price of the most recent full month for the MSCI EAFE index). The price level of this index is available starting in December 1969. Again, for the reasons described above, we elected to use the Shiller E-10 as our measure of earnings ( $E$ ). Since 12/1972, a monthly price earnings ratio is available from MSCI. Using this quoted ratio, we have backed out the implied trailing-twelve month earnings of the EAFE index for each month from 12/1972 to the present. These annualized earnings are then inflation adjusted using CPI-U to represent real earnings in US dollar terms for each time period. The Shiller E-10 for the EAFE index (10 year average real earnings) is calculated in the same manner as detailed above.

However, we do not believe that the pricing and earnings history of the EAFE markets are long enough to be a reliable representation of pricing history for developed market equities outside of the US. Therefore, in constructing the Long-Term Average Historical P/E for developed ex-US equities for comparison purposes, we have elected to use the US equity market as a developed market proxy, from 1881 to 1982. This lowers the Long-Term Average Historical P/E considerably. We believe this methodology provides a more realistic historical comparison for a market with a relatively short history.

## **Metric description, rationale for selection and calculation methodology**

### **Emerging Market Equity Markets:**

Metric: Ratio of Emerging Market P/E Ratio to Developed Market P/E Ratio

To represent the Emerging Markets P/E Ratio, we have chosen the MSCI Emerging Market Free Index, which has P/E data back to January 1995 on Bloomberg. To represent the Developed Markets PE Ratio, we have chosen the MSCI World Index, which also has data back to January 1995 on Bloomberg. Although there are issues with published, single time period P/E ratios, in which the denominator effect can cause large movements, we feel that the information contained in such movements will alert investors to market activity that they will want to interpret.

### **US Private Equity Markets:**

Metrics: S&P LCD Average EBITDA Multiples Paid in LBOs and US Quarterly Deal Volume

The Average Purchase Price to EBITDA multiples paid in LBOs is published quarterly by S&P in their LCD study. This is the total price paid (both equity and debt) over the trailing-twelve month EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization) as calculated by S&P LCD. This is the relevant, high-level pricing metric that private equity managers use in assessing deals. Data is published monthly.

US quarterly deal volume for private equity is the total deal volume in \$ billions (both equity and debt) reported in the quarter by Thomson Reuters Buyouts. This metric gives a measure of the level of activity in the market. Data is published quarterly.

### **U.S Private Real Estate Markets:**

Metrics: US Cap Rates, Cap Rate Spreads, and Transactions as a % of Market Value

Real estate cap rates are a measure of the price paid in the market to acquire properties versus their annualized income generation before financing costs (NOI=net operating income). The data, published by NCREIF, describes completed and leased properties (core) on an unleveraged basis. We chose to use current value cap rates. These are capitalization rates from properties that were revalued during the quarter. This data relies on estimates of value and therefore tends to be lagging (estimated prices are slower to rise and slower to fall than transaction prices). The data is published quarterly.

Spreads between the cap rate (described above) and the 10-year nominal Treasury yield, indicate a measure of the cost of properties versus a current measure of the cost of financing.

Transactions as a % of Market Value Trailing-Four Quarters is a measure of property turnover activity in the NCREIF Universe. This quarterly metric is a measure of activity in the market.

### **Credit Markets US Fixed Income:**

Metric: Spreads

The absolute level of spreads over treasuries and spread trends (widening / narrowing) are good indicators of credit risk in the fixed income markets. Spreads incorporate estimates of future default, but can also be driven by technical dislocations in the fixed income markets. Abnormally narrow spreads (relative to historical levels) indicate higher levels of valuation risk, wide spreads indicate lower levels of valuation risk and / or elevated default fears. Investment grade bond spreads are represented by the Barclays Capital US Corporate Investment Grade Index Intermediate Component. The high yield corporate bond spreads are represented by the Barclays Capital US Corporate High Yield Index.



## **Metric description, rationale for selection and calculation methodology**

### **Measure of Equity Market Fear / Uncertainty**

Metric: VIX – Measure of implied option volatility for U.S. equity markets

The VIX is a key measure of near-term volatility conveyed by implied volatility of S&P 500 index option prices. VIX increases with uncertainty and fear. Stocks and the VIX are negatively correlated. Volatility tends to spike when equity markets fall.

### **Measure of Monetary Policy**

Metric: Yield Curve Slope

We calculate the yield curve slope as the 10 year treasury yield minus the 1 year treasury yield. When the yield curve slope is zero or negative, this is a signal to pay attention. A negative yield curve slope signals lower rates in the future, caused by a contraction in economic activity. Recessions are typically preceded by an inverted (negatively sloped) yield curve. A very steep yield curve (2 or greater) indicates a large difference between shorter-term interest rates (the 1 year rate) and longer-term rates (the 10 year rate). This can signal expansion in economic activity in the future, or merely higher future interest rates.

### **Measures of US Inflation Expectations**

Metrics: Breakeven Inflation and Inflation Adjusted Commodity Prices

Inflation is a very important indicator impacting all assets and financial instruments. Breakeven inflation is calculated as the 10 year nominal treasury yield minus the 10 year real yield on US TIPS (treasury inflation protected securities). Abnormally low long-term inflation expectations are indicative of deflationary fears. A rapid rise in breakeven inflation indicates an acceleration in inflationary expectations as market participants sell nominal treasuries and buy TIPS. If breakeven inflation continues to rise quarter over quarter, this is a signal of inflationary worries rising, which may cause Fed action and / or dollar decline.

Commodity price movement (above the rate of inflation) is an indication of anticipated inflation caused by real global economic activity putting pressure on resource prices. We calculate this metric by adjusted in the Dow Jones UBS Commodity Index (formerly Dow Jones AIG Commodity Index) by US CPI-U. While rising commodity prices will not necessarily translate to higher US inflation, higher US inflation will likely show up in higher commodity prices, particularly if world economic activity is robust.

These two measures of anticipated inflation can, and often are, conflicting.

### **Measures of US Treasury Bond Interest Rate Risk**

Metrics: 10-Year Treasury Forward-Looking Real Yield and 10-Year Treasury Duration

The expected annualized real yield of the 10 year U.S. Treasury Bond is a measure of valuation risk for U.S. Treasuries. A low real yield means investors will accept a low rate of expected return for the certainty of receiving their nominal cash flows. PCA estimates the expected annualized real yield by subtracting an estimate of expected 10 year inflation (produced by the Survey of Professional Forecasters as collected by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia), from the 10 year Treasury constant maturity interest rate.

Duration for the 10-Year Treasury Bond is calculated based on the current yield and a price of 100. This is a measure of expected percentage movements in the price of the bond based on small movements in percentage yield. We make no attempt to account for convexity.



## **Metric description, rationale for selection and calculation methodology**

### Definition of “extreme” metric readings

A metric reading is defined as “extreme” if the metric reading is in the top or bottom decile of its historical readings. These “extreme” reading should cause the reader to pay attention. These metrics have reverted toward their mean values in the past.



## PCA Market Sentiment Indicator

### *Explanation, Construction and Q&A*

By:

Pension Consulting Alliance, Inc.

*John Linder, CFA, CPA*

*Neil Rue, CFA*

*PCA has created the PCA Market Sentiment Indicator (PMSI) to complement our valuation-focused PCA Investment Market Risk Metrics. This measure of sentiment is meant to capture significant and persistent shifts in long-lived market trends of economic growth risk, either towards a risk-seeking trend or a risk-aversion trend.*

*This paper explores:*

- *What is the PCA Market Sentiment Indicator (PMSI)?*
- *How do I read the indicator graph?*
- *How is the PCA Market Sentiment Indicator (PMSI) constructed?*
- *What do changes in the indicator mean?*



PCA has created a market sentiment indicator for monthly publication (the PMSI – see below) to complement PCA's Investment Market Risk Metrics.

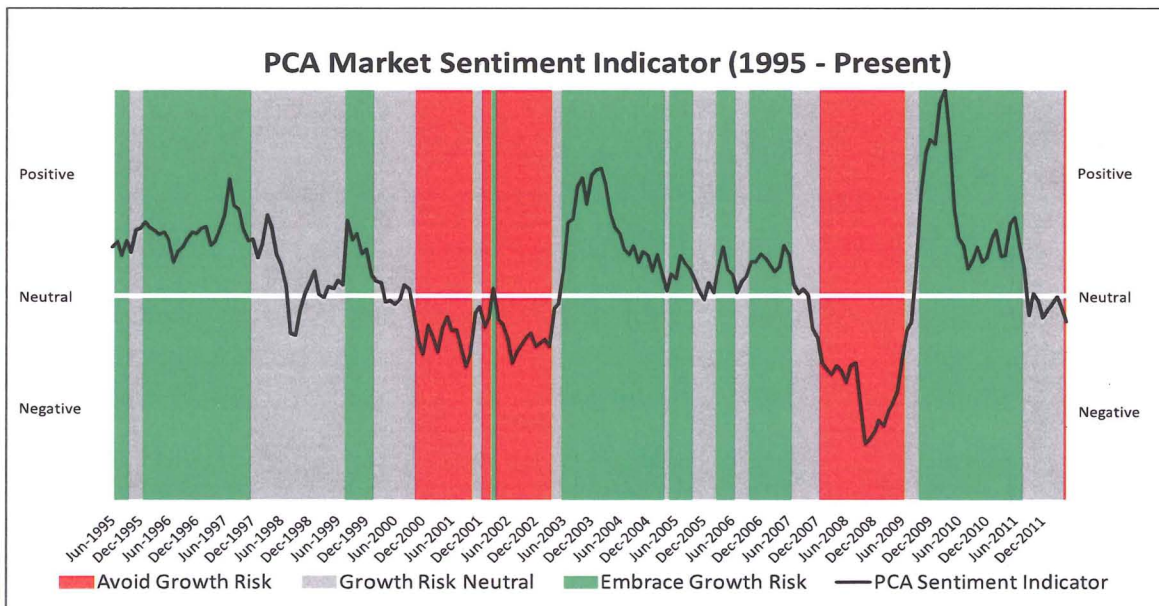
PCA's Investment Market Risk Metrics, which rely significantly on standard market measures of relative valuation, often provide valid early signals of increasing long-term risk levels in the global investment markets. However, as is the case with numerous valuation measures, the Risk Metrics may convey such risk concerns long before a market corrections take place. The PMSI helps to address this early-warning bias by measuring whether the markets are beginning to acknowledge key Risk Metrics trends, and / or indicating non-valuation based concerns. Once the PMSI indicates that the market sentiment has shifted, it is our belief that investors should consider significant action, particularly if confirmed by the Risk Metrics. Importantly, PCA believes the Risk Metrics and PMSI should always be used in conjunction with one another and never in isolation. The questions and answers below highlight and discuss the basic underpinnings of the PCA PMSI:

#### What is the PCA Market Sentiment Indicator (PMSI)?

The PMSI is a measure meant to gauge the market's sentiment regarding economic growth risk. Growth risk cuts across most financial assets, and is the largest risk exposure that most portfolios bear. The PMSI takes into account the momentum<sup>i</sup> (trend over time, positive or negative) of the economic growth risk exposure of publicly traded stocks and bonds, as a signal of the future direction of growth risk returns; either positive (risk seeking market sentiment), or negative (risk averse market sentiment).

#### How do I read the PCA Market Sentiment Indicator (PMSI) graph?

Simply put, the PMSI is a color coded indicator that signals the market's sentiment regarding economic growth risk. It is read left to right chronologically. A green indicator on the PMSI indicates that the market's sentiment towards growth risk is positive. A gray indicator indicates that the market's sentiment towards growth risk is neutral or inconclusive. A red indicator indicates that the market's sentiment towards growth risk is negative. The black line on the graph is the level of the PMSI. The degree of the signal above or below the neutral reading is an indication the signal's current strength.







### **How is the PCA Market Sentiment Indicator (PMSI) Constructed?**

The PMSI is constructed from two sub-elements representing investor sentiment in stocks and bonds:

1. Stock return momentum: Return momentum for the S&P 500 Equity Index (trailing 12-months)
2. Bond yield spread momentum: Momentum of bond yield spreads (excess of the measured bond yield over the identical duration U.S. Treasury bond yield) for corporate bonds (trailing 12-months) for both investment grade bonds (75% weight) and high yield bonds (25% weight). The scale of this measure is adjusted to match that of the stock return momentum measure.

The black line reading on the graph is calculated as the average of the stock return momentum measure and the bonds spread momentum measure. The color reading on the graph is determined as follows:

1. If both stock return momentum and bond spread momentum are positive = GREEN (positive)
2. If one of the momentum indicators is positive, and the other negative = GRAY (inconclusive)
3. If both stock return momentum and bond spread momentum are negative = RED (negative)

### **What does the PCA Market Sentiment Indicator (PMSI) mean? Why might it be useful?**

There is strong evidence that time series momentum is significant and persistent.<sup>ii</sup> In particular, across an extensive array of asset classes, the sign of the trailing 12-month return (positive or negative) is indicative of future returns (positive or negative) over the next 12 month period. The PMSI is constructed to measure this momentum in stocks and corporate bond spreads. A reading of green or red is agreement of both the equity and bond measures, indicating that it is likely that this trend (positive or negative) will continue over the next 12 months. When the measures disagree, the indicator turns gray. A gray reading does not necessarily mean a new trend is occurring, as the indicator may move back to green, or into the red from there. The level of the reading (black line) and the number of months at the red or green reading, gives the user additional information on which to form an opinion, and potentially take action.

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<sup>i</sup> Momentum as we are defining it is the use of the past behavior of a series as a predictor of its future behavior.

<sup>ii</sup> "Time Series Momentum" Moskowitz, Ooi, Pedersen, August 2010  
<http://pages.stern.nyu.edu/~lpederse/papers/TimeSeriesMomentum.pdf>