# Diamond Hill Mid Cap Strategy

As of March 31, 2021

## Market Commentary

Following a trying 2020, investors (and people in general) were hopeful that 2021 would bring better times. Thus far, we've seen continued distribution of COVID-19 vaccines globally, gradual steps to reopening economies and broad gains in U.S. stocks across sectors.

In Q1, all sectors in the Russell Midcap® Index posted positive returns. Strong double-digit gains were seen in the market's more cyclical areas, including energy, financials, consumer discretionary and materials, on expectations that U.S. economic growth and demand are picking up steam. On the other end of the spectrum were health care, technology and utilities stocks. After 43% and 35% gains in 2020, technology and health care cooled off in Q1 with 0.9% and 0.5% returns.

Small cap stocks were the winners this quarter, advancing 12.7% compared to an 8.1% gain for mid caps and a 5.9% gain for large caps. As they did in Q4 2020, value bested growth across the market cap spectrum with the widest dispersion in small caps where value led growth by over 1600 basis points. Mid cap value stocks beat their growth counterparts by more than 1300 basis points, and large cap value stocks outpaced large cap growth by 1032 basis points.

It's fascinating to note that over the past 13 months, which includes a once-in-a-hundred-years (hopefully) global pandemic, U.S. stocks have advanced 36%, and over the past 12 months they have advanced 62% (as measured by the Russell 3000® Index). Those are incredible gains considering what we've been through over the past year. As valuation-disciplined investors, strong market advances like these make our job of finding stocks trading at discounts to their intrinsic value more challenging, but we continue to look for pockets of the market that are not being rewarded.

**TEAM**

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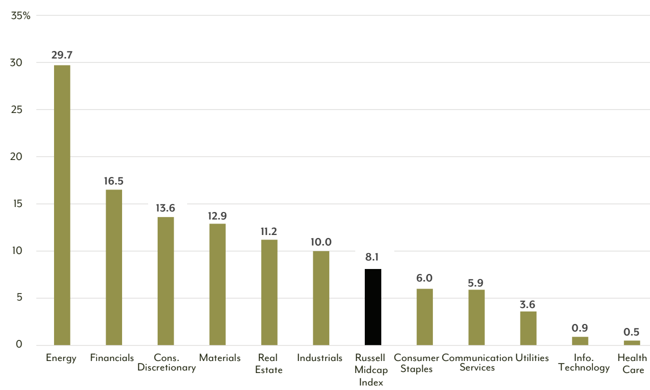
**RUSSELL MIDCAP® INDEX SECTOR RETURNS - 1Q21**




Source: FactSet.

## Performance Discussion

The portfolio outpaced the Russell Midcap® Index in the quarter with positive absolute results across almost all sectors. Only our technology holdings posted mildly negative Q1 returns following 2020's solid gains, though our underweight to this index-trailing sector boosted relative results. Being underweight to health care also proved a boon, as did strong performances among our industrials holdings. Of particular note was financials—our largest absolute and relative sector exposure—and specifically banks, where solid earnings for our holdings along with optimism from vaccine rollouts, reopening of the economy, the prospect of rising rates, an improvement in credit, and the possibility of increased M&A activity provided a tailwind. Our materials underweight was a slight relative headwind, and our residual cash weighed modestly on results amid strong market returns.

On an individual holdings basis, top contributors to return included bank holdings SVB Financial and Sterling Bancorp. In general, banks had been better positioned heading into the COVID-19-related shutdowns than during the financial crisis due to regulatory requirements for higher capital levels and more prudent underwriting. That said, our holdings tend to have carved out a specialized niche and/or have a strong geographic footprint, have proven to be conservative underwriters and have demonstrated their ability to compound returns and grow intrinsic value. Sterling Bancorp focuses on building relationships with small and middle-market companies in the Long Island region that larger banks tend to overlook. Sterling also appears to be astute in

Please see GIPS report in the appendix.

making acquisitions and allocating capital, having executed well on three larger acquisitions since 2013 and opportunistically repurchasing shares, all while investing in technology necessary to meet clients' changing demands.

Red Rock Resorts was another top contributor in Q1, as it has been since the pandemic-related market bottom in March 2020. Red Rock controls over half the Las Vegas locals market, where government legislation restricting greenfield development has effectively created a duopoly. Through a tough operating environment, management has meticulously controlled costs and improved the balance sheet and is delivering record margins. We believe there is tremendous pent-up demand waiting to be released amid post-pandemic reopening—on top of favorable conditions for economic expansion in Las Vegas, including an attractive tax environment driving in-migration.

We believe Hanesbrands is an apparel company that can transition well online—critical in the age of Amazon. It was a top contributor in Q1 thanks to solid momentum relative to pre-COVID levels. We continue to be impressed with new leadership's thoughtful assessment of the company and its growth plans. We expect cash flow to be resilient and believe the company can improve its competitive positioning in coming years.

Other top contributors in the quarter included Cimarex Energy, an independent oil and gas exploration and production company operating primarily in the Permian Basin and Mid-Continent regions.

Bottom contributors included PROG Holdings, the largest virtual lease-to-own provider in the U.S. Weaker traffic at PROG's brick-and-mortar partners and supply chain issues impacted availability of furniture and appliances to lease. We anticipate these issues should improve later in 2021. Additionally, an inquiry into lease-to-own providers by California's relatively new Department of Financial Protection and Innovation may lead to an increased regulatory burden. However, management is executing well on its integration of e-commerce capabilities with existing partners and is looking to expand with third-party platforms. Further, the business model is attractive as it is relatively asset-light and generates strong and consistent free cash flow.

Apparel and footwear company V.F. Corporation lagged this quarter as the market seemed to be concerned with the performance of Vans®, its largest brand. The recovery for the brand has been slow due in part to its higher exposure to lockdowns in California and Europe. The company has been proactive in reducing inventory and marketing spend to ensure the long-term brand equity of Vans®. The remainder of its brand portfolio has experienced solid momentum, and our long-term fundamental outlook remains unchanged.

Carter's, which sells baby clothes under brands like Carter's and OshKosh, was another bottom contributor. Carter's stock slumped in Q1 when forward guidance did not meet investors' expectations and management outlined a lower long-term margin profile than previously communicated. In our view, Carter's is the market-share leader in infant and baby apparel with strong brand recognition across both its wholesale platform and omni-channel retail presence. This competitive position should enable Carter's to transition and thrive in the more digitally driven environment of our future.

Other bottom contributors included IT security company Check Point Software Technology and IT consultant Cognizant.

## Portfolio Activity

We added just one new name to the portfolio in Q1—Rayonier, a timber REIT with holdings in the U.S. and New Zealand. Rayonier's U.S. timberlands should benefit from increased residential remodeling and construction as relocation and demographic trends shift. In addition, timberland assets could see a significant long-term increase in profitability in a strong home construction market due to pine beetle-induced supply destruction of a sizable portion of British Columbia's lumber production. Rayonier has a solid balance sheet and a strong management team, while timberlands offer an interesting inflationary hedge.

We exited student housing REIT American Campus Communities and provider of networking and cybersecurity solutions Juniper Networks in favor of reallocating to higher conviction names. We sold global consultant firm Willis Towers Watson as it approached our estimate of intrinsic value.

## Market Outlook

After history's largest real GDP decline in early 2020, economic activity has been rebounding—albeit, different economic areas are recovering at different paces. Retail spending, for example, has been above 2019 levels for several quarters, while other industries may take years to return to such levels. We expect the recovery to continue in 2021 as vaccines are distributed more broadly and restrictions on day-to-day life are eased.

The fiscal and monetary stimulus implemented in the past 12 months is unprecedented, and the Fed made it clear that it will continue doing what it takes to support the U.S. economy—including its intention to keep short-term interest rates near zero through 2023. President Biden also approved nearly $2 trillion of additional COVID-19 relief and is considering additional spending that could focus on areas like infrastructure, jobs and climate change. Along with real GDP growth above historic averages, corporate earnings are expected to increase dramatically in 2021 and reach new highs. That said, a sharp economic rebound, along with continued stimulus, could spur a rise in inflation. Higher inflation and the interest rates that may come with it could be a headwind for equity markets and are risks we are monitoring closely.

Although equity markets have recently hit all-time highs and corporate earnings may soon do the same, the after-effects of COVID-19 will likely linger more acutely for certain industries. While certain businesses have seen unprecedented spikes in demand, others have seen the opposite and have had to borrow heavily to survive. We have been focused on how businesses have managed their balance sheets and liquidity situations through the crisis, and how long-term competitive positions may have been impacted.

With the distribution of multiple, highly efficacious vaccines progressing, it is expected that the spread of COVID-19 will continue to slow over the next several quarters. Despite the risk of new variants, equity markets seemingly reflect much of the economic recovery to come, with a forward P/E multiple at a historically elevated level. From current levels, equity market returns over the next five years are expected to be below historic norms.

Our primary focus is always on achieving value-added results for our existing clients, and we believe we can achieve better-than-market returns over the next five years through active portfolio management.

# Diamond Hill Mid Cap Strategy

As of March 31, 2021

## PERIOD AND ANNUALIZED TOTAL RETURNS

Inception Date: December 31, 2013

| | SINCE INCEPTION | 5-YR | 3-YR | 1-YR | YTD | 1Q21 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MID CAP COMPOSITE | | | | | | |
| **Gross of Fees** | 9.28 | 10.75 | 9.17 | 79.03 | 13.85 | 13.85 |
| **Net of Fees** | 8.65 | 10.14 | 8.62 | 78.22 | 13.73 | 13.73 |
| BENCHMARKS | | | | | | |
| **Russell Midcap Index** | 11.76 | 14.67 | 14.73 | 73.64 | 8.14 | 8.14 |
| **Russell Midcap Value Index** | 9.77 | 11.60 | 10.70 | 73.76 | 13.05 | 13.05 |

## CALENDAR YEAR RETURNS (%)

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MID CAP COMPOSITE | | | | | | | |
| **Gross of Fees** | 8.83 | 1.62 | 19.62 | 11.30 | -9.55 | 26.73 | -0.99 |
| **Net of Fees** | 8.13 | 0.95 | 18.86 | 10.65 | -10.09 | 26.12 | -1.47 |
| BENCHMARKS | | | | | | | |
| **Russell Midcap Index** | 13.22 | -2.44 | 13.80 | 18.52 | -9.06 | 30.54 | 17.10 |
| **Russell Midcap Value Index** | 14.75 | -4.78 | 20.00 | 13.34 | -12.29 | 27.06 | 4.96 |

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| AS OF YEAR-END | DHCM | MID CAP COMPOSITE | | | 3-YR ANNUALIZED STANDARD DEVIATION (GROSS OF FEES) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Assets Under Management | Number of Accounts | Assets Under Management | Dispersion (Gross of Fees) | Mid Cap Composite | Russell Midcap Index | Russell Midcap Value Index |
| **2020** | $26.4B | 5 or fewer | $991.4M | NA[1] | 24.56% | 21.82% | 22.62% |
| **2019** | 23.4B | 5 or fewer | 569.1M | NA[1] | 13.22 | 12.89 | 12.79 |
| **2018** | 19.1B | 5 or fewer | 143.5M | NA[1] | 11.42 | 11.98 | 11.96 |
| **2017** | 22.3B | 5 or fewer | 129.6M | NA[1] | 9.53 | 10.36 | 10.32 |
| **2016** | 19.4B | 5 or fewer | 58.8M | NA[1] | 10.87 | 11.55 | 11.30 |
| **2015** | 16.8B | 5 or fewer | 18.6M | NA[1] | NA[2] | NA[2] | NA[2] |
| **2014** | 15.7B | 5 or fewer | 16.3M | NA[1] | NA[2] | NA[2] | NA[2] |

[1] NA = Not Applicable

[2] Statistics are not presented because 36 monthly returns are not available.

This composite was created in December 2013.

The views expressed are those of Diamond Hill as of March 31, 2021 and are subject to change. It should not be assumed that an investment in the securities identified was or will be profitable. The holdings identified do not represent all of the securities purchased, sold, or recommended for the adviser's clients. To obtain the contribution calculation methodology and a complete list of every holding's contribution to the overall portfolio's performance during the measurement period, please contact 855.255.8955 or info@diamond-hill.com. These opinions are not intended to be a forecast of future events, a guarantee of results, or investment advice.

Global Investment Performance Standards