

William Blair Mid Cap Growth Fund Fund Manager Commentary

Market Overview

In a volatile first quarter, U.S. equity indices declined as the Omicron wave, inflation concerns, and the invasion of Ukraine weighed on equity valuations. Entering the year, the U.S. was experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases as the Omicron variant spread quickly, resulting in renewed disruptions for certain businesses. Elevated inflation drove expectations for faster monetary tightening by the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) and corresponded with a rise in 10-year U.S. Treasury bond yields and U.S. mortgage rates. During March, the FOMC increased the target federal funds rate by 25 basis points for the first increase in this cycle, with expectations for multiple increases throughout 2022 and 2023. The Russian invasion of Ukraine intensified inflationary pressures and supply chain concerns, given Russia's role as a major energy and commodity producer, and contributed to higher oil and gas prices. With higher inflation and an increase in expectations for the pace of Fed rate hikes, equity valuations were pressured while U.S. corporate earnings remained solid.

Fund Performance

The William Blair Mid Cap Growth Fund (Class of N shares) performed approximately in-line with its benchmark during the quarter, as stock specific dynamics were largely offsetting. Top detractors were Consumer Discretionary holdings Farfetch and Burlington Stores. Farfetch is a leading e-commerce marketplace focused on the luxury market whose shares were pressured by macro issues, including the company's exposure to consumers in Europe and China, and difficult year-over-year comparisons. Off-price retailer Burlington Stores experienced traffic and inventory headwinds. Other laggards included EPAM Systems (Information Technology), Coupa Software (Information Technology) and Etsy (Consumer Discretionary). Top contributors in the quarter were New Fortress Energy (Energy) and Teledyne Technologies (Information Technology). New Fortress Energy develops, finances and constructs liquified natural gas (LNG) assets and related infrastructure. The company announced a number of project milestones and shares were further supported by a strong backdrop to sign new deals. Teledyne Technologies is a highly diversified supplier of sensing, imaging, communications and control technologies to the commercial, industrial, research and defense industries. Teledyne provided strong forward-looking guidance driven by early realization of synergies related to its recent acquisition of FLIR. BWX Technologies (Industrials), Pure Storage (Information Technology) and SolarEdge Technologies (Information Technology) were among other top contributors to performance.

Outlook

Amid tightening financial conditions and significant geopolitical tension, we anticipate greater focus on the potential for slowing

Top 10 Holdings¹ as of 3/31/22

| <i>Company</i> | <i>% of Fund</i> |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Copart, Inc. | 3.8 |
| Palo Alto Networks, Inc. | 3.2 |
| Pure Storage, Inc. | 3.2 |
| Cadence Design Systems, Inc. | 3.1 |
| CoStar Group, Inc. | 3.0 |
| Dynatrace, Inc. | 3.0 |
| Vulcan Materials Company | 2.9 |
| Euronet Worldwide, Inc. | 2.8 |
| Teledyne Technologies Incorporated | 2.8 |
| Horizon Therapeutics Public Limited Company | 2.6 |
| Total Top 10 | 30.4 |

economic growth. Relatedly, near the end of the first quarter, 2-year and 10-year U.S. Treasury yields inverted briefly. From a demand standpoint, the outlook for consumer spending is opaque given the opposing dynamics of inflationary pressures weighing on real income versus pent-up demand for services and experiences post-Omicron and a positive employment backdrop. Supply chain disruptions are likely to continue, exacerbated by conflict in eastern Europe as well as China's zero COVID policy closing major manufacturing centers throughout the country, further clouding visibility as to the U.S. economic trajectory in the near to intermediate term.

With this backdrop, we believe it is increasingly likely that investors will differentiate among stocks on the basis of quality attributes, such as the durability of earnings and margins. Further, given the valuation-driven sell off in the first quarter, more attractive valuations in certain areas have presented opportunities. We believe our philosophy of identifying durable businesses whose stocks present attractive risk/reward opportunities should serve us well in a variety of economic environments, as it has historically.

¹Listed holdings are presented to illustrate examples of the securities that the Fund has bought and do not represent all of the Fund's holdings or future investments. Information about the Fund's holdings should not be considered investment advice. There is no guarantee that the Fund will continue to hold any one particular security or stay invested in any one particular sector. Holdings are subject to change at any time and are as of the date shown above. Top ten holdings are shown as a percentage of total net assets.



INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE (AS OF 3/31/22)

| | QTR | YTD | 1 Y | 3 Y | 5 Y | 10 Y |
|------------------------------------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Class I (SI: 02/01/06) | -12.95% | -12.95% | -3.89% | 10.68% | 13.29% | 10.44% |
| Class N (SI: 02/01/06) | -13.02% | -13.02% | -4.19% | 10.37% | 12.99% | 10.15% |
| Russell Midcap [®] Growth Index | -12.58% | -12.58% | -0.89% | 14.81% | 15.10% | 13.52% |

Performance cited represents past performance. Past performance does not guarantee future results and current performance may be lower or higher than the data quoted. Returns shown assume reinvestment of dividends and capital gains. Investment returns and principal will fluctuate with market and economic conditions and you may have a gain or loss when you sell shares. For the most current month-end performance information, please call +1 800 742 7272, or visit our Web site at www.williamblairfunds.com. Class N shares are available to the general public without a sales load. Class I shares are available only to investors who meet certain eligibility requirements.

EXPENSE RATIOS

| | Gross Expense | Net Expense |
|---------|---------------|-------------|
| Class I | 1.29% | 0.95% |
| Class N | 1.54% | 1.20% |

Expenses shown are as of the most recent prospectus. The Fund's Adviser has contractually agreed to waive fees and/or reimburse expenses to limit fund operating expenses until 4/30/22.

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES

The Fund's returns will vary, and you could lose money by investing in the Fund. The Fund invests most of its assets in equity securities of domestic growth companies where the primary risk is that the value of the equity securities it holds might decrease in response to the activities of those companies or market and economic conditions. Individual securities may not perform as expected or a fund used by the Adviser may fail to produce its intended result. The securities of smaller and medium sized companies tend to be more volatile and less liquid than securities of larger companies. In addition, small and medium sized companies may be traded in lower volumes. This can increase volatility and increase the liquidity risk whereby the Fund will not be able to sell the security on short notice at a reasonable price. The Fund is not intended to be a complete investment program. The Fund is designed for long-term investors.

The Russell Midcap Growth Index is an index that is constructed to provide a comprehensive and unbiased barometer of the mid-cap growth market. The Index is unmanaged, does not incur fees or expenses, and cannot be invested in directly.

This content is for informational and educational purposes only and not intended as investment advice or a recommendation to buy or sell any security. Investment advice and recommendations can be provided only after careful consideration of an investor's objectives, guidelines, and restrictions.

Please carefully consider the Fund's investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses before investing. This and other information is contained in the Fund's prospectus and summary prospectus, which you may obtain by calling +1 800 742 7272. Read the prospectus and summary prospectus carefully before investing. Investing includes the risk of loss.

Distributed by William Blair & Company, L.L.C., member FINRA/SIPC

Copyright © William Blair & Company, L.L.C. "William Blair" is a registered trademark of William Blair & Company, L.L.C.

NOT FDIC INSURED | NO BANK GUARANTEE | MAY LOSE VALUE