

# Strategic Value Dividend Investment Team



## Market insights and investment view

December 2023

### Objectives update

- **Dividend yield:** The portfolio's holdings had a weighted average dividend yield at 12/31/23 of more than three times that of the S&P 500®.
- **Dividend growth:** Dividend growth in 2023 met our target. Thirty of the portfolio's 40 companies raised dividends in 2023.
- **Long-term total return:** Our income-first approach seeks to generate competitive long-term total return driven by dividends and dividend growth. Longer-term, the portfolio delivered this return objective, as shown below. In 2023, high quality, low beta dividend-paying stocks were extremely out of favor as market sentiment skyrocketed share prices of mega cap growth stocks. The lowest dividend yield quintile stocks outperformed the highest quintile by 51.72%, the highest beta quintile outperformed the lowest by 50.62%, and lower quality stocks outperformed high quality.<sup>1</sup>

### Insights from the team

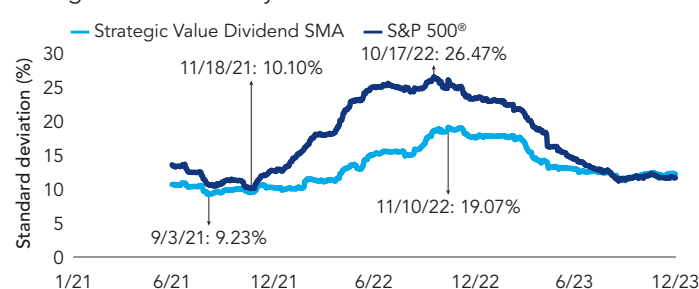
- **Mega caps:** The five largest weights in the S&P 500® are 25% of the index, the highest in recent history. In 1990, they were 12%.<sup>2</sup>
- **Changing interest rate environment:** Since 1990 there have been 8 periods of falling interest rates. Four defensive sectors led during these periods: Health Care (16.0% average return), Consumer Staples (12.9%), Utilities (12.0%) and Communications Services (11.8%). This suggests the portfolio may be well-positioned for a falling rate period, as it invests primarily in defensive sectors. Also, in an analysis of the returns of different asset classes after past Fed hike pauses, the high-dividend index performed best.<sup>3</sup>

### Investment view

- **The tortoise and the hare:** In today's uncertain, jumpy market environment, a lower volatility equity strategy such as ours can provide a "smoother ride," capturing upside while limiting downside over time. Research shows that high-dividend stocks can lower the risk of an investor's equity sleeve long-term while still providing competitive returns.<sup>4</sup> We seek quality companies with high dividends, dividend growth potential, strong balance sheets, stable cash flows and pricing power. These offer competitive long-term return potential, high- and rising-income potential, lower volatility and currently, attractive valuations. We believe that prices should eventually revert to reflect strong company fundamentals more accurately and now is a buying opportunity.

### Strategic Value Dividend SMA provided competitive two and three-year returns with lower volatility

Rolling 6-month volatility



	Annualized returns				Sharpe ratio	
	1-year	2-year	3-year	Since inception (10/1/01)	3-year	Since inception (10/1/01)
<b>SVD SMA (gross)</b>	-2.54	1.61	8.26	8.39	0.40	0.55
<b>SVD SMA (net of maximum 300bps fee)</b>	-5.43	-1.40	5.07	5.20	-	-
<b>S&amp;P 500®</b>	26.29	1.69	10.00	9.18	0.45	0.51
<b>Russell 1000® Value Index</b>	11.46	1.52	8.86	7.95	0.44	0.41
<b>NASDAQ Composite*</b>	44.64	-1.22	6.04	-	0.26	-

The graph shows rolling 6-month standard deviation of daily gross returns from 1/4/21 to 12/31/23. Graph shows standard deviation beginning 6/30/21. The SMA's three-year standard deviation based on monthly gross returns was 15.19% as of 12/31/23; the S&P 500's was 17.29%. \*Since inception data is not available for the NASDAQ Composite, which started 9/25/03. Refer to the attached GIPS® report for composite performance and additional information. **Past performance is not indicative of future results.**

### Average annual total returns (%) as of 12/31/23

	1-yr	5-yr	10-yr	20-yr	Since inception 10/1/01
<b>Strategic Value Dividend SMA (gross)</b>	-2.54	7.30	6.89	7.50	8.39
<b>Strategic Value Dividend SMA (net of maximum fee)</b>	-5.43	4.14	3.74	4.34	5.20
<b>S&amp;P 500®</b>	26.29	15.69	12.03	9.69	9.18

Unless otherwise noted, all information is as of 12/31/23.

Not FDIC Insured • May Lose Value • No Bank Guarantee

## Strategic Value Dividend SMA

### Our philosophy

We believe in owning businesses that are committed to providing investors regular dividend payments.

We are not a traditional equity value shop; rather, we believe in an income-first approach that seeks to deliver a high current yield and growing income stream to our clients. We believe we can meet the needs of investors seeking current income, as well as those looking for moderate capital appreciation through dividend growth.

### Objective

The strategy's objective is to provide a high level of current income and long-term capital appreciation driven by dividend growth.

- Pursues a substantially higher dividend yield than the broad market average
- Invests in high-quality companies that are positioned to increase their dividend distribution over time
- Seeks competitive performance in strong market environments and lower downside risk in periods of broad market weakness

### Key data

- Gross weighted average dividend yield of 5.10%<sup>5</sup> is more than 3x the S&P 500<sup>®</sup> at 1.48% and more than the 10-year Treasury at 3.88%
- Trailing 12 months there were 31 dividend increases and zero cuts
- Top sector weights: Utilities 21.42% / Energy 16.80% / Staples 14.74% / Financials 12.90%; (0% in Discretionary and 0% in Technology)
- 100% of the 40 holdings were investment-grade rated (highest S&P-rated holdings: Sanofi at AA; lowest: ConagraBrands, Inc. at BBB-)

Portfolio statistics	Strategic Value Dividend SMA	S&P 500 <sup>®</sup> Index	Top 10 holdings (%)	Weight	Prospective dividend yield <sup>1</sup>
<b>Wtd. average dividend yield (%)<sup>5</sup></b>	5.10	1.48	<b>TotalEnergies SE</b>	5.22	4.81
<b>Wtd. median P/E ratio (NTM)</b>	14.43x	22.50x	<b>Philip Morris International Inc.</b>	4.47	5.53
<b>Median 3-year average dividend payout ratio</b>	65.15	29.03	<b>Verizon Communications Inc.</b>	4.17	7.06
<b>Wtd. median price/book</b>	1.69x	6.70x	<b>Duke Energy Corporation</b>	4.05	4.23
<b>Wtd. median price/cash flow</b>	7.99x	20.89x	<b>National Grid PLC</b>	3.89	5.39
<b>Portfolio beta vs. S&amp;P 500 (3 year)<sup>6</sup></b>	0.64	1.00	<b>Williams Companies Inc.</b>	3.66	5.14
<b>Percentage in non-U.S./ADRs</b>	25.40	0.00	<b>Enbridge Inc.</b>	3.65	7.67
<b>Number of holdings</b>	40	500	<b>LyondellBasell Industries N.V.</b>	3.52	5.26
			<b>BCE Inc.</b>	3.23	7.42
			<b>U.S. Bancorp</b>	3.05	4.53

Unless otherwise noted, all information is as of 12/31/23.

<sup>1</sup> Bank of America Global Research.

<sup>2</sup> As of 12/31/23. Sources: Strategas, Bloomberg LP. Based on data beginning 1990 showing the percent sum of the five largest weights in the S&P 500.

<sup>3</sup> Federated Hermes (2023). Which asset classes performed best after rate hike pauses? FederatedHermes.com. Retrieved 1/23/24.

<sup>4</sup> Federated Hermes (2023). Dividend strategies: An underappreciated equity approach hiding in plain sight. FederatedHermes.com. Retrieved 1/23/24.

<sup>5</sup> **Portfolio yield is only one component of available portfolio characteristics and it is not and should not be viewed as a statement of the current or future performance.** See the disclosures at the end of this document for yield definition.

<sup>6</sup> The 3 year beta is derived using 3 years of monthly linked returns to calculate the covariance of the portfolio and the broad market divided by the variance of the 3 year monthly linked returns of the broad market.

Yield for the portfolio and index is the weighted average dividend yield. The current U.S. 10-year Treasury yield is not a dividend yield and is shown for comparison purposes. See the disclosures at the end of this document for yield definitions. Refer to the attached GIPS<sup>®</sup> report for additional information.

While there is no assurance that the strategy will achieve its objective, the advisor endeavors to do so by selecting securities in the manner described in this document.

Investment-grade securities are securities that are rated at least "BBB" or unrated securities of a comparable quality. Non-investment-grade securities are securities that are not rated at least "BBB" or unrated securities of a comparable quality.

**Past performance is no guarantee of future results.**

## Monthly trading activity and rationale

	Company	Rationale
Purchases	AbbVie, Inc. (increased)	AbbVie has de-risked the Humira patent cliff by diversifying with the Allergan acquisition, successfully developing superior follow-on products (Skyrizi and Rinvoq) and leveraging their negotiating power ahead of biosimilar launches. We expect earnings to return to growth in 2024 and beyond as they benefit from the growth of existing and new products, which should allow for continued solid dividend growth. AbbVie generates significant and rising cash flows which we believe provides ample flexibility to make necessary acquisitions while reducing leverage and paying a high and rising dividend. Their inclination to pay and grow the dividend is very strong, even relative to their peers.
	Kenvue Inc. (increased)	Kenvue's portfolio of leading consumer health brands (Neutrogena, Listerine, Tylenol, Johnson's Baby, Nicorette, Zyrtec, and Band-Aid) is expected to support its mid-50%'s gross margin, providing earnings consistency that underpins the dividend. The company's "A" rated balance sheet and clear target of 55% to 65% payout ratio support dividend growth in line with its mid to long term earnings-per-share (EPS) growth trajectory. With renewed focus and a curated portfolio, we believe Kenvue is well positioned to maintain market share in a global consumer health category that grows 3% to 4% annually, underpinning a mid-single digit EPS/dividend-per-share growth rate.
Sales	Crown Castle was reduced to provide funds for purchases.	

Unless otherwise noted, all information is as of 12/31/23.

As of the date indicated, the new buys listed were and may still be held within the strategy and at the time of this report was (and may still be) considered by Federated Investment Counseling to be a "hold" recommendation for the purposes of the strategy's portfolio. The information presented is not definitive investment advice, should not be relied on as such, and should not be viewed as a recommendation by Federated Investment Counseling generally or for any purpose outside of this strategy as of the date indicated. It is presented solely to illustrate Federated Investment Counseling's investment process and its analysis and views of the security presented as of the date indicated. The securities presented are not representative of all of the securities purchased, sold or held for advisory clients, and it should not be assumed that the investment in the security identified was or will be profitable. Federated Investment Counseling's views of, recommendations with respect to, and investment decisions regarding, the security presented may vary across Federated Investment Counseling's strategies. Such recommendation is subject to change continually and without notice of any kind and may no longer be true after the date indicated.

## Schedule of rates of return and statistics

Composite	Federated Hermes Strategic Value Dividend SMA
Index	S&P 500 Index
Periods ending	12/31/23

	Returns (%)		
	Composite pure gross return <sup>^</sup>	Index	Net composite return (assuming maximum fee)
<b>Q4 23</b>	8.99	11.69	8.19
<b>1 Year</b>	-2.54	26.29	-5.43
<b>3 Years (Annlzd)</b>	8.26	10.00	5.07
<b>5 Years (Annlzd)</b>	7.30	15.69	4.14
<b>7 Years (Annlzd)</b>	6.11	13.41	2.98
<b>10 Years (Annlzd)</b>	6.89	12.03	3.74
<b>15 Years (Annlzd)</b>	9.15	13.96	5.94
<b>20 Years (Annlzd)</b>	7.50	9.69	4.34
<b>Oct 01 - Dec 23 (Annlzd)<sup>^^</sup></b>	8.39	9.18	5.20

	Composite pure gross return (%) <sup>^</sup>	Composite net return (%)	Benchmark return (%)	*Composite 3-yr std dev	*Benchmark 3-yr std dev	Number of portfolios	**Dispersion	Composite assets (\$mil)	Firm assets (\$bil)
<b>2014</b>	12.34	9.05	13.68	8.92	8.97	6,412	0.23	2,223.3	349.3
<b>2015</b>	4.00	0.93	1.37	9.97	10.47	6,982	0.21	2,309.9	343.4
<b>2016</b>	10.05	6.82	11.95	9.93	10.59	11,970	0.25	3,189.3	342.3
<b>2017</b>	15.64	12.26	21.82	9.11	9.92	13,884	0.16	3,918.8	354.7
<b>2018</b>	-7.89	-10.64	-4.40	9.83	10.80	10,330	0.21	2,526.3	377.2
<b>2019</b>	20.43	16.91	31.49	9.64	11.94	11,038	0.24	3,037.4	503.1
<b>2020</b>	-6.94	-9.71	18.40	15.60	18.53	9,585	0.87	2,497.4	585.7
<b>2021</b>	22.89	19.32	28.71	15.52	17.17	9,776	0.41	3,062.5	634.2
<b>2022</b>	5.94	2.82	-18.11	18.00	20.87	2,533	0.28	999.0	627.4
<b>2023</b>	-2.54	-5.43	26.29	15.19	17.29	2,178	0.25	780.0	720.0

<sup>^</sup>Pure gross returns are shown as supplemental and do not reflect the deduction of transaction costs.

<sup>^^</sup>Represents composite inception period. See additional notes to the schedule of rates of return and statistics.

\*Represents the 3-year annualized standard deviation for both the gross composite and the index returns. Statistic is used to measure the volatility of composite returns.

\*\*Standard deviation is calculated using gross returns. Standard deviation is not applicable ("N/A") for any period if fewer than five accounts are in the composite for that period. (See footnote 5)

This composite is comprised of all domestic portfolios investing in U.S. and foreign stocks that management believes will provide high yield, reasonable dividend growth and lower volatility in falling equity market environments yet will provide potential participation in rising markets. Eligible portfolios are managed with wide latitude to choose the sectors and securities to fulfill the mandate. Within eligible portfolios, securities are selected based on a fundamental assessment of their financial strength, dividend yields, dividend growth rates, and performance during periods of market weakness. Portfolios in this composite implement the strategy using American Depositary Receipts (ADR) versus directly purchasing shares of companies on foreign exchanges. Investments in ADRs entail risks related to daily fluctuations in the value of currency, which may be more volatile in times of increased market risk. There are no guarantees that dividend-paying stocks will continue to pay dividends. Effective December 2022 and retroactive to inception, the composite's official benchmark is the S&P 500. The S&P 500 is an unmanaged capitalization-weighted index of 500 stocks designed to measure performance of the broad domestic economy through changes in the aggregate market value of 500 stocks representing all major industries. Previously, the composite utilized the Dow Jones Select Dividend Index (2007-2022) and the Russell MidCap Value Index (2001-2007). Because the strategy's objectives of dividend yield and dividend growth are absolute in nature, and the strategy's investment universe/ guidelines do not align well to many dividend index proxies, the S&P 500 was chosen as the most applicable broad market comparison for the strategy's overall risk/return performance profile. The strategy generally takes a benchmark-agnostic investment approach, and while the strategy expects lower volatility than the S&P 500 (or broad equity market), it does not actively seek to outperform the S&P 500 as one of its investment goals. Indexes are unmanaged and cannot be invested in directly. Effective July 2013, performance for this composite is calculated in U.S. dollars net of foreign withholding taxes on dividends, interest, and capital gains. Individual tax rates may vary dependent on individual residency. Effective January 2016 accounts previously assigned to a platform-restricted composite may be eligible for inclusion in this composite. Accounts deemed by the portfolio manager to have a category restriction shall be excluded from this composite. A category is defined as a collection of investments with similar attributes such as industry classification, business sensitivity, social theme, or security features. Separate accounts eligible for this composite generally have a minimum of \$100,000 at the time of opening and are a part of an asset-based pricing program. Wrap fee accounts make up 100% of this composite for all time periods. This composite was created in December 2001. Federated Hermes has managed portfolios in this investment style since July 1997. Performance shown for 2001 is for a partial period starting on October 1, 2001. Federated Hermes claims compliance with the Global Investment Performance Standards ("GIPS®") and has prepared and presented this report in compliance with the GIPS® standards. Federated Hermes has been independently verified for the period of January 1, 1992, through September 30, 2023. The verification report is available upon request. A firm that claims compliance with the GIPS® standards must establish policies and procedures for complying with all the applicable requirements of the GIPS® standards. Verification provides assurance on whether the firm's policies and procedures related to composite and pooled fund maintenance, as well as the calculation, presentation, and distribution of performance, have been designed in compliance with the GIPS® standards and have been implemented on a firm-wide basis. Verification does not provide assurance on the accuracy of any specific performance report. Performance results are presented both net and gross of total wrap fees and reflect the reinvestment of income. "Pure" gross returns are shown as supplemental and do not reflect the deduction of transaction costs. Net returns reflect the deduction of a maximum fee. A fee equal to the highest anticipated wrap fee that a client could pay (3.00% annually as charged by the program sponsor, inclusive of up to a maximum investment advisory fee of 0.70%) is used. This total wrap fee includes all charges for trading costs, portfolio management, custody and other administrative fees. Actual fees may vary depending on, among other things, the applicable fee schedule and portfolio size.

## Notes to the schedule of rates of return and statistics

1. Federated Hermes is a global, independent, multi-strategy investment management firm. For GIPS® purposes, Federated Hermes is defined to include the assets of registered investment companies that are advised or sub-advised by the various Federated Hermes advisory companies. Effective September 30, 2020, for GIPS® purposes the name of the firm was officially changed to Federated Hermes. Firm assets on this report exclude assets affiliated with Hermes GPE and the advisory-only, model-based assets that may be included in other reports providing total firm assets.
2. Interest income and dividends are recognized on an accrual basis. Returns include the reinvestment of all income.
3. All market values and performance information are valued in USD unless currency is denoted in composite description.
4. Annual composite dispersion is measured and presented using the asset weighted standard deviation of the gross returns of all of the portfolios included in the composite over the entire year. Prior to January 2023, annual dispersion for the CW Henderson composites was measured using the equal weighted standard deviation of the returns of all the portfolios included in the composite over the entire year. Effective January 2023 this was changed to asset weighted. Prior to March 2020 with regard to Federated Clover Investment Advisors composites, annual dispersion was measured using the equal weighted standard deviation of the returns of all the portfolios included in the composite over the entire year.
5. Composite dispersion does not measure the risk of the product presented, it simply measures the return variance among portfolios managed in a similar fashion. This variance can be affected by variations in cash flow or specific client parameters among the portfolios comprising the composites, as well as by execution of strategy across accounts.
6. See the composite description language for a discussion on appropriate fees currently applied to calculate composite performance. With regard to the institutional composites not managed by the MDT Advisers and Federated Hermes London office teams, for the period July 1, 1992 through September 30, 2009, net of fee performance was calculated monthly by reducing the gross composite return by the highest actual fee of any account in the composite for that month, regardless of investment vehicle. Prior to July 1992, the maximum management fee for third quarter 1992 was used to calculate net of fee performance historically to inception of the composite. For those composites managed by the Federated Hermes London office investment team, net composite results are based off model fees using the stated fee schedule. In addition, further fee information can be obtained from the firm's respective Forms ADV Part 2 Brochure Item 5.
7. Additional information regarding the policies for valuing investments, calculating performance, and preparing GIPS® reports, as well as a complete list and description of the firm's composites and pooled funds is available upon request.
8. Past performance is not indicative of future results.
9. GIPS® is a registered trademark of CFA Institute. CFA Institute does not endorse or promote this organization, nor does it warrant the accuracy or quality of the content contained herein.
10. See disclosures on the Schedule of Rates of Return and Statistics Reports for additional information.

Portfolio characteristics are based on a portfolio which is used as a guide for cloning (or managing) underlying accounts to a particular strategy. Taking into consideration individual investor circumstances could cause deviation from this guide (e.g. restrictions, tax requests, etc.). Portfolio characteristics are as of the date indicated and are based on individual securities in the portfolio on that date. Securities in the portfolio are subject to change.

Since this is a managed portfolio and market conditions can fluctuate suddenly and frequently, the portfolio holdings and investment mix will change.

**10-year Treasury yield** is the yield received for investing in a US government issued treasury security that has a maturity of 10 years.

**Beta** analyzes the market risk of a fund by showing how responsive the fund is to the market. The beta of the market is 1.00. Accordingly, a fund with a 1.10 beta is expected to perform 10% better than the market in up markets and 10% worse in down markets. Usually higher betas represent riskier investments.

**Dividend payout ratio** is the proportion of earnings paid out as dividends to shareholders, typically expressed as a percentage.

**Price-to-cash flow ratio** is a stock valuation indicator or multiple that measures the value of a stock's price relative to its operating cash flow per share.

**Price-to-earnings ratio (P/E ratio)** is a valuation ratio of a company's current share price compared to its per-share earnings. The P/E ratio helps investors determine the market value of a stock as compared to the company's earnings. A low P/E ratio might indicate that a stock that has the potential for significant growth is undervalued. P/E ratios are only one indicator of a company's financial well-being.

**S&P 500® Index** an unmanaged capitalization-weighted index of 500 stocks designated to measure performance of the broad domestic economy through changes in the aggregate market value of 500 stocks representing all major industries.

**Sharpe Ratio** is calculated by dividing a fund's annualized excess return by the fund's annualized standard deviation. The higher the Sharpe Ratio, the better the fund's historical risk adjusted performance.

Indexes are unmanaged and cannot be invested in directly.

**Weighted average dividend yield** is the prospective dividend yield for each security averaged based on the percentages of the securities in the portfolio. Prospective dividend yield is calculated by taking the most recent declared dividend payment multiplied by the number of dividend payments typically made during the year for each holding divided by the current share price for each security. This is calculated based on a snapshot in time and may change due to fluctuations in share prices, dividends actually paid and changes in holdings in the portfolio.

### Risk considerations

Investing in equities is speculative and involves substantial risk.

There are no guarantees that dividend-paying stocks will continue to pay dividends. In addition, dividend-paying stocks may not experience the same capital appreciation potential as non-dividend-paying stocks.

International investing involves special risks including currency risk, increased volatility, political risks and differences in auditing and other financial standards.