

Risk Factors Comparison 2025-03-14 to 2024-03-14 Form: 10-K

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In addition to the other information contained in this Annual Report, you should carefully consider the risks described below, as well as the risk factors and uncertainties discussed in our other public filings with the SEC under the caption “ Risk Factors ” in evaluating us and our business and making or continuing an investment in our stock. Our operations and financial results are subject to various risks and uncertainties, including, but not limited to, the material risks described below. Many of these risks are beyond our control although efforts are made to manage those risks while simultaneously optimizing operational and financial results. The occurrence of any of the following risks, as well as risks of which we are currently unaware or currently deem immaterial, could materially and adversely affect our assets, business, cash flows, condition (financial or otherwise), liquidity, prospects, results of operations and the trading price of our common stock. It is impossible to predict or identify all such factors and, as a result, you should not consider the following factors to be a complete discussion of the risks, uncertainties and assumptions that could materially and adversely affect our assets, business, cash flows, condition (financial or otherwise), liquidity, prospects, results of operations and the trading price of our common stock. In addition, certain statements in the following risk factors constitute forward- looking statements. Please refer to the section entitled “ Cautionary Note Regarding Forward- Looking Statements ” beginning on page 1 of this Annual Report. Risks Related to Our Business Difficult or volatile conditions in the national financial markets and local economies may adversely affect our results of operations and financial condition. Our business and financial performance are vulnerable to weak economic conditions in the financial markets and economic conditions generally or specifically in the state of Georgia, the principal market in which we conduct business. We are operating in a challenging and uncertain economic environment. The global credit and financial markets have from time to time experienced extreme volatility and disruptions, including as a result of severely diminished liquidity and credit availability, declines in consumer confidence, declines in economic growth, increases in unemployment rates, high **or elevated** rates of inflation, **as a result of trade wars and / or tariffs**, the U. S. government’ s decisions regarding its debt ceiling and the possibility that the U. S. could default on its debt obligations, fluctuations in debt and equity capital markets, increased delinquencies on mortgage, commercial and consumer loans, residential and commercial real estate price declines, and lower home sales and commercial activity, changes in securities markets and uncertainty about economic stability. As a result, financial institutions continue to be affected by uncertainty, including in the real estate market, the credit markets, and the national financial market generally. We retain direct exposure to the commercial and residential real estate markets, and we are affected by events in these markets. The financial markets and the global economy may also be adversely affected by ~~the current or anticipated impact of military conflict~~, **including the current conflicts between Russia and Ukraine and in the Middle East, which are increasing** **increase in** volatility in commodity and energy prices, ~~creating~~ supply chain issues and ~~causing~~ instability in financial markets. Sanctions imposed by the United States and other countries in response to such conflicts could further adversely impact the financial markets and the global economy, and any economic countermeasures by the affected countries or others could exacerbate market and economic instability. Moreover, substantially all of our loans are to businesses and individuals in Georgia, and ~~all~~ **most** of our branches and ~~most of our~~ deposit customers are also located in this area. As a result, local economic conditions significantly affect the demand for loans and other products we offer to our customers (including real estate, commercial and construction loans), the ability of borrowers to repay these loans and the value of the collateral securing these loans. A decline in the economies in which we operate could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations, including, but not limited to the following: • demand for our loans, deposits and services may decline; • loan delinquencies, problem assets and foreclosures may increase; • weak economic conditions may continue to limit the demand for loans by creditworthy borrowers, limiting our capacity to leverage our retail deposits and maintain our net interest income; • collateral for our loans may decline further in value; and • the amount of our low- cost or non- interest bearing deposits may decrease. Strong competition and changing banking environment may limit growth and profitability. Competition in the banking and financial services industry is intense. We compete with commercial banks, savings institutions, mortgage brokerage firms, credit unions, finance companies, mutual funds, insurance companies, brokerage and investment banking firms operating locally and elsewhere, non- traditional financial institutions, including fintech companies, and non- depository financial services providers. Many of these competitors (whether regional or national institutions) have substantially greater resources and lending limits than we have and may offer certain services that we do not or cannot provide. Additionally, non- traditional financial institutions may not have the same regulatory requirements or burdens as we do, despite playing a rapidly increasing role in the financial services industry including providing services previously limited to commercial banks. **For example, our credit union competitors benefit from competitive advantages, including the credit union exemption from paying federal income tax and can, therefore, more aggressively price many products and services.** Such competition could ultimately limit our growth, profitability and shareholder value, as increased competition in our markets may result in reduced loans, deposits and commissions and brokers’ fees, gains on sales, servicing fees, as well as reduced net interest margin and profitability. If we are unable to successfully compete in our market areas and adapt to the ever- changing banking environment, we may be unable to continue to grow our business, and our financial condition and results of operations may be adversely affected. We also compete with many forms of payments offered by both bank and non- bank providers, including a variety of new and evolving alternative payment mechanisms, systems and products, such as aggregators and web- based and wireless payment platforms or technologies, digital or “ crypto ” currencies, prepaid systems and payment services targeting users of social networks, communications platforms and online gaming. Our future success may depend, in

part, on our ability to use technology competitively to offer products and services that provide convenience to customers and create additional efficiencies in our operations. Some of our competitors have reduced or eliminated certain service charges on deposit accounts, including overdraft fees, and additional competitors may be willing to reduce or eliminate service or other fees in order to attract additional customers. If the Company chooses to reduce or eliminate certain categories of fees, including those related to deposit accounts, fee income related to these products and services would be reduced. If the Company chooses not to take such actions, we may be at a competitive disadvantage in attracting customers for certain fee producing products.

Fluctuations in interest rates may impact net interest income and otherwise negatively impact our financial condition and results of operations. Net interest income, which is the difference between the interest income that we earn on interest-earning assets and the interest expense that we pay on interest-bearing liabilities, is a major component of our income and our primary source of revenue from our operations. A further narrowing of interest rate spreads could adversely affect our earnings and financial condition. We cannot control or predict with certainty changes in interest rates. Regional and local economic conditions, competitive pressures and the policies of regulatory authorities, including monetary policies of the Federal Reserve, affect interest income and interest expense. Interest rates are highly sensitive to many factors including, without limitation: the rate of inflation; economic conditions; federal monetary policies; and stability of domestic and foreign markets. Interest rates ~~increased~~ **decreased significantly by a full percentage point** in 2023-2024 as the Federal Reserve attempted to ~~slow~~ **stimulate** economic growth and counteract ~~rising~~ **a drop in** inflation levels. Further changes in interest rates and monetary policy reportedly are dependent upon the Federal Reserve's assessment of economic data as it becomes available, and the Company cannot predict the nature or timing of future changes in monetary, economic, or other policies or the effect that they may have on the Company's business activities, financial condition and results of operations. Increasing interest rates can have a negative impact on our business by reducing the amount of money our customers borrow or by adversely affecting their ability to repay outstanding loan balances that may increase due to adjustments in their variable rates. This may lead to an increase in nonperforming assets and a reduction of income recognized, which could have a material adverse effect on our results of operations and cash flows. In addition, in a rising interest rate environment we may have to offer more attractive interest rates to depositors to compete for deposits, or pursue other sources of liquidity, such as wholesale funds. Conversely, lower interest rates may reduce our realized yield on variable rate loans and investment securities and on new loans and securities, which would reduce our interest income and cause downward pressure on net interest income and net interest margin. Higher income volatility from changes in interest rates and spreads to benchmark indices could result in a decrease in net interest income and a decrease in current fair market values of our assets. Fluctuations in interest rates impacts both the level of income and expense recorded on most of our assets and liabilities and the market value of all interest-earning assets and interest-bearing liabilities, which in turn could have a material adverse effect on our net income, operating results, asset quality, liquidity, or financial condition. A prolonged period of volatile and unstable market conditions would likely increase our funding costs and negatively affect market risk mitigation strategies. We have ongoing policies and procedures designed to manage the risks associated with changes in market interest rates and actively manage these risks through hedging and other risk mitigation strategies. However, these risks are often outside of our control, and if our assumptions are wrong or overall economic conditions are significantly different than anticipated, our risk mitigation techniques may be ineffective or costly. Inflation could negatively impact our business, our profitability and our stock price. ~~Inflation continued rising in 2023 and inflationary pressures remained elevated throughout 2023 and are likely to continue into 2024.~~ Prolonged periods of inflation may impact our profitability by negatively impacting our fixed costs and expenses, including increasing funding costs and expense related to talent acquisition and retention, and negatively impacting the demand for our products and services. Additionally, inflation may lead to a decrease in consumer and clients purchasing power and negatively affect the need or demand for our products and services. If significant inflation continues, our business could be negatively affected by, among other things, increased default rates leading to credit losses which could decrease our appetite for new credit extensions. These inflationary pressures could result in missed earnings and budgetary projections causing our stock price to suffer. Our future success is largely dependent upon our ability to successfully execute our business strategy. Our future success, including our ability to achieve our growth and profitability goals, is dependent on the ability of our management team to execute on our long-term business strategy, which requires them to, among other things: maintain and enhance our reputation; attract and retain experienced and talented bankers in each of our markets; maintain adequate funding sources, including by continuing to attract stable, low-cost deposits; enhance our market penetration in our metropolitan markets and maintain our leadership position in our community markets; improve our operating efficiency; implement new technologies to enhance the client experience and keep pace with our competitors; attract and maintain commercial banking relationships with well-qualified businesses, real estate developers and investors with proven track records in our market areas; attract sufficient loans that meet prudent credit standards; maintain adequate liquidity and regulatory capital and comply with applicable federal and state banking regulations; manage our credit, interest rate and liquidity risks; develop new, and grow our existing, streams of noninterest income; oversee the performance of third-party service providers that provide material services to our business; and control expenses in line with current projections. Failure to achieve these strategic goals could adversely affect our ability to successfully implement our business strategies and could negatively impact our business, growth prospects, financial condition and results of operations. Further, if we do not manage our growth effectively, our business, financial condition, results of operations and future prospects could be negatively affected, and we may not be able to continue to implement our business strategy and successfully conduct our operations. Liquidity risks could affect operations and jeopardize our business, financial condition, and results of operations. Liquidity is essential to our business. An inability to raise funds through deposits, borrowings, the sale of loans and / or investment securities and through other sources could have a substantial negative effect on our liquidity. Our most important source of funds consists of our customer deposits. Such deposit balances can decrease when customers perceive alternative investments, such as the stock market, as providing a better risk / return tradeoff. If customers move money out of bank deposits and into other investments, we could lose a relatively low cost

source of funds, which would require us to seek wholesale funding alternatives in order to continue to grow, thereby increasing our funding costs and reducing our net interest income and net income. Moreover, competition among U. S. banks and non-banks for customer deposits is intense and may increase the cost of deposits (particularly in an elevated rate environment) or prevent new deposits and may otherwise negatively affect our ability to grow our deposit base. In addition, our access to deposits may be affected by the liquidity and / or cash flow needs of depositors, which may be exacerbated in an inflationary, recessionary, or elevated rate environment. This may cause our deposit accounts to decrease in the future, and any such decrease could have a material adverse impact on our sources of funding. Other primary sources of funds consist of cash from operations, investment maturities and sales, sale of loans and proceeds from the issuance and sale of our equity securities to investors. Additional liquidity is provided by our ability to borrow from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta. We also may borrow from third- party lenders from time to time. Our access to funding sources in amounts adequate to finance or capitalize our activities or on terms that are acceptable to us could be impaired by factors that affect us directly or the financial services industry or economy in general, such as disruptions in the financial markets or negative views and expectations about the prospects for the financial services industry. Any decline in available funding could adversely impact our ability to continue to implement our strategic plan, including our ability to originate loans, invest in securities, meet our expenses, or to fulfill obligations such as repaying our borrowings or meeting deposit withdrawal demands, any of which could have a material adverse impact on our liquidity, business, financial condition and results of operations. Our business depends on our ability to successfully manage our asset quality and credit risk. We are subject to the risk of losses resulting from the failure of borrowers, guarantors and related parties to pay us the interest and principal amounts due on their loans. Although we maintain well- defined credit policies and credit underwriting and monitoring and collection procedures, these policies and procedures may not prevent losses, as some of these risks are outside of our control, particularly during periods in which the local, regional or national economy suffers a general decline. Moreover, **in the event of a return to elevated inflation and interest rates,** the future effects ~~of the continued elevated inflationary and interest rate environment~~ on economic activity could negatively affect the collateral values associated with our existing loans, the ability to liquidate the real estate collateral securing our residential and commercial real estate loans, our ability to maintain loan origination volume and to obtain additional financing, the future demand for or profitability of our lending and services, and the financial condition and credit risk of our customers. Further, in the event of delinquencies, regulatory changes and policies designed to protect borrowers may slow or prevent us from making our business decisions or may result in a delay in our taking certain remediation actions, such as foreclosure. If borrowers fail to repay their loans, our financial condition and results of operations would be adversely affected. Our commercial real estate, real estate construction, and commercial business loans increase our exposure to credit risks. At December 31, ~~2023-2024~~, our portfolio of commercial real estate and commercial, financial and agricultural loans totaled \$ ~~1. 4~~ **1. 4 billion or 76. 5 billion or 77. 7%** of total loans compared to \$ ~~1. 4-5~~ **1. 4-5 billion, or 82-77. 3-7%** of total loans at December 31, ~~2022-2023~~. At December 31, ~~2023-2024~~, the amount of nonperforming commercial real estate and commercial, financial and agricultural loans was \$ ~~6-9. 3-4~~ **6-9. 3-4 million, or 61-86. 3-9%** of total nonperforming loans. These loans may expose us to a greater risk of non- payment and loss than residential real estate loans because, in the case of commercial loans, repayment often depends on the successful operation and earnings of the borrower' s businesses and, in the case of consumer loans, the applicable collateral is subject to rapid depreciation. Additionally, commercial real estate loans typically involve larger loan balances to single borrowers or groups of related borrowers compared to residential real estate loans. If loans that are collateralized by real estate become troubled and the value of the real estate has been significantly impaired, then we may not be able to recover the full contractual amount of principal and interest due on the loan, which could cause us to increase our provision for loan losses and adversely affect our financial condition and operating results. Because a significant portion of our loan portfolio is comprised of real estate loans, negative changes in the economy affecting real estate values and liquidity could impair the value of collateral securing our real estate loans and result in loans and other losses. At December 31, ~~2023-2024~~, approximately 83. ~~8-6~~ **8-6%** of our loan portfolio was comprised of loans with real estate as a primary or secondary component of collateral. As a result, adverse developments affecting real estate values in our market areas could increase the credit risk associated with our real estate loan portfolio. The market value of real estate can fluctuate significantly in a short period of time as a result of market conditions in the geographic area in which the real estate is located. Adverse changes affecting real estate values and the liquidity of real estate in one or more of our markets could increase the credit risk associated with our loan portfolio, significantly impair the value of property pledged as collateral on loans and affect our ability to sell the collateral upon foreclosure without a loss or additional losses, which could result in losses that would adversely affect credit quality, profitability, financial condition, and results of operation. Such declines and losses would have a material adverse impact on our business, results of operations and growth prospects. In addition, the value and salability of properties pledged as collateral could be adversely impacted as a result of the presence of hazardous or toxic substances and we may incur significant remediation costs or expenses as a result.. Our provision and allowance for credit losses may not cover actual losses, and we may be required to materially increase our allowance, which may adversely affect our capital, financial condition and results of operations. We make various assumptions and judgments about the collectability of our loan and lease portfolio and utilize these assumptions and judgments when determining the provision and allowance for credit losses. The determination of the appropriate level of the provision and allowance for credit losses inherently involves a high degree of subjectivity and requires us to make significant estimates of current credit risks ~~using~~ **using** existing qualitative and quantitative information and future trends, all of which may undergo material changes. Deterioration in economic conditions affecting borrowers, new information regarding existing loans, identification of additional problem loans and other factors, both within and outside of our control, may require an increase in the amount reserved in the allowance for credit losses. Because the risk rating of the loans is dependent on some subjective information and subject to changes in the borrower' s credit risk profile, evolving local market conditions and other factors, it can be difficult for us to predict the effects that those factors will have on the classifications assigned to the loan

portfolio, and thus difficult to anticipate the velocity or volume of the migration of loans through the classification process and effect on the level of the allowance for credit losses. In addition, due to the declining economic conditions, our customers may not be able to repay their loans according to the original terms, and the collateral securing the payment of those loans may be insufficient to pay any remaining loan balance. While we maintain our allowance to provide for loan defaults and non-performance, losses may exceed the value of the collateral securing the loans and the allowance may not fully cover any excess loss. In addition, bank regulatory agencies periodically review our provision and the total allowance for credit losses and may require an increase in the allowance for credit losses or future provisions for credit losses on loans, based on judgments different than those of management. Any increases in the provision or allowance for credit losses will result in a decrease in our net income and, potentially, capital, and may have a material adverse effect on our financial condition or results of operations. We may not be able to meet our unfunded credit commitments, or adequately reserve for losses associated with our unfunded credit commitments. A commitment to extend credit is a formal agreement to lend funds to a client as long as there is no violation of any condition established under the agreement. The borrowing needs of our customers may exceed our expected funding requirements, especially during a challenging economic environment when our client companies may be more dependent on our credit commitments due to the lack of available credit elsewhere, the increasing costs of credit, or the limited availability of financings from other sources. Any failure to meet our unfunded credit commitments in accordance with the borrowing needs of our customers may have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition, results of operations or reputation. We use brokered deposits which may be an unstable and / or expensive deposit source to fund earning asset growth. We use brokered deposits, as a source of funding to support our asset growth and augment deposits generated from our branch network, which are our principal source of funding. We have established policies and procedures with respect to the use of brokered deposits, which require, among other things, that (i) we limit the amount of brokered deposits as a percentage of total assets, and (ii) our asset liability committee monitors our use of brokered deposits on a regular basis, including interest rates and the total volume of such deposits in relation to our total assets. In the event that our funding strategies call for the use of brokered deposits, there can be no assurance that such sources will be available, or will remain available, or that the cost of such funding sources will be reasonable. Additionally, if the Bank is no longer considered well-capitalized, our ability to access new brokered deposits or retain existing brokered deposits could be affected by market conditions, regulatory requirements or a combination thereof, which could result in most, if not all, brokered deposit sources being unavailable. The inability to utilize brokered deposits as a source of funding could have an adverse effect on our financial position, results of operations and liquidity. We hold certain intangible assets that in the future could be classified as either partially or fully impaired, which would reduce our earnings and the book values of these assets. Pursuant to applicable accounting requirements, we are required to periodically test our goodwill and core deposit intangible assets for impairment. The impairment testing process considers a variety of factors, including the current market price of our common shares, the estimated net present value of our assets and liabilities and information concerning the terminal valuation of similarly situated insured depository institutions. Future impairment testing may result in a partial or full impairment of the value of our goodwill or core deposit intangible assets, or both. If an impairment determination is made in a future reporting period, our earnings and the book value of these intangible assets will be reduced by the amount of the impairment. Acquisitions could disrupt our business and adversely affect our operating results. To the extent that we grow through acquisitions, we may not be able to adequately or profitably manage this growth. In addition, such acquisitions may involve the issuance of securities, which may have a dilutive effect on earnings per share. Acquiring banks, bank branches or businesses involves risks commonly associated with acquisitions, including: • potential exposure to unknown or contingent liabilities we acquire; • exposure to potential asset quality problems of the acquired financial institutions, businesses or branches; • difficulty and expense of integrating the operations and personnel of financial institutions, businesses or branches we acquire; • higher than expected deposit attrition; • potential diversion of our management's time and attention; • the possible loss of key employees and customers of financial institutions, businesses or branches we acquire; • difficulty in safely investing any cash generated by the acquisition; • inability to utilize potential tax benefits from such transactions; • difficulty in estimating the fair value of the financial institutions, businesses or branches to be acquired which affects the profits we generate from the acquisitions; and • potential changes in banking or tax laws or regulations that may affect the financial institutions or businesses to be acquired or the ability to obtain all required regulatory approvals. In addition, we face significant competition from numerous other financial services institutions, many of which will have greater financial resources than we do, when considering acquisition opportunities. Accordingly, attractive acquisition opportunities may not be available to us. Furthermore, we may not be able to complete future acquisitions and, if we do complete such acquisitions, we may not be able to successfully integrate the operations, management, products and services of the entities that we acquire and eliminate redundancies. If we are unable to grow our noninterest income, our growth prospects will be impaired. Taking advantage of opportunities to develop new, and expand existing, streams of noninterest income, including service charges, interchange fees and mortgage fees, is a part of our long-term growth strategy. If we are unsuccessful in our attempts to grow our noninterest income, our long-term growth will be impaired. Furthermore, focusing on these noninterest income streams may divert management's attention and resources away from our core banking business, which could impair our core business, financial condition and operating results. Decreased residential mortgage origination, volume and pricing decisions of competitors may adversely affect our profitability. Our mortgage operation originates residential mortgage loans and services residential mortgage loans. Changes in interest rates, housing prices, financial stress on borrowers as a result of economic conditions, regulations by the applicable governmental authorities and pricing decisions by our loan competitors may adversely affect demand for our residential mortgage loan products, revenues received from servicing such loans for others, and ultimately reduce our net income. New regulations and increased regulatory reviews may be introduced and may increase costs and make it more difficult to operate a residential mortgage origination business. Nonperforming assets take significant time to resolve and adversely affect our results of operations and financial condition, and could result in further

losses in the future. Our nonperforming assets adversely affect our net income in various ways. We do not record interest income on nonaccrual loans or OREO, thereby adversely affecting our net interest income, net income and returns on assets and equity, and our loan administration costs increase, which together with reduced interest income adversely affects our efficiency ratio. When we take collateral in foreclosure and similar proceedings, we are required to mark the collateral to its then- fair market value, which may result in a loss. These nonperforming loans and OREO also increase our risk profile and the level of capital our regulators believe is appropriate for us to maintain in light of such risks. The resolution of nonperforming assets requires significant time commitments from management and can be detrimental to the performance of their other responsibilities. If we experience increases in nonperforming loans and nonperforming assets, our net interest income may be negatively impacted and our loan administration costs could increase, each of which would have an adverse effect on our net income and related ratios, such as return on assets and equity. We could recognize losses on securities held in our securities portfolio, particularly if interest rates increase or economic and market conditions deteriorate. Changes in interest rates may negatively affect both the returns on and market value of our investment securities. Interest rate volatility can reduce unrealized gains or increase unrealized losses in our portfolio. Interest rates are highly sensitive to many factors including monetary policies, domestic and international economic and political issues, and other factors beyond our control. These changes can negatively impact our other comprehensive income and equity levels through accumulated other comprehensive income, which includes net unrealized gains and losses on our investment securities. Further, such losses could be realized into earnings should liquidity and / or business strategy necessitate the sales of securities in a loss position. Additionally, actual investment income and cash flows from investment securities that carry prepayment risk, such as mortgage- backed securities and callable securities, may materially differ from those anticipated at the time of investment or subsequently as a result of changes in interest rates and market conditions. These occurrences could have a material adverse effect on our net interest income or our results of operations. The implementation of other new lines of business or new products and services may subject us to additional risk. We continuously evaluate our service offerings and may implement new lines of business or offer new products and services within existing lines of business in the future. There are substantial risks and uncertainties associated with these efforts. In developing and marketing new lines of business and / or new products and services, we undergo a new product process to assess the risks of the initiative, and invest significant time and resources to build internal controls, policies and procedures to mitigate those risks, including hiring experienced management to oversee the implementation of the initiative. Initial timetables for the introduction and development of new lines of business and / or new products or services may not be achieved and price and profitability targets may not prove feasible. External factors, such as compliance with regulations, competitive alternatives, and shifting market preferences, may also impact the successful implementation of a new line of business and / or a new product or service. Furthermore, any new line of business and / or new product or service could require the establishment of new key and other controls and have a significant impact on our existing system of internal controls. Failure to successfully manage these risks in the development and implementation of new lines of business and / or new products or services could have a material adverse effect on our business and, in turn, our financial condition and results of operations. We are highly dependent on our management team, and the loss of our senior executive officers or other key employees could harm our ability to implement our strategic plan, impair our relationships with customers and adversely affect our business, results of operations and growth prospects. Our success depends, in large part, on our ability to attract and retain key personnel. Competition for the best personnel in most activities we engage in can be intense, as we compete with both smaller banks that may be able to offer bankers with more responsibility and autonomy and larger banks that may be able to offer bankers with higher compensation, resources and support, and we may not be able to hire personnel or to retain them. As a result, we may not be able to effectively compete for talent across our markets. Further, our bankers may leave us to work for our competitors and, in some instances, may take important banking and lending relationships with them to our competitors. If we are unable to attract and retain talented bankers in our markets, our business, growth prospects and financial results could be materially and adversely affected. In addition, the unexpected loss of services of one or more of our key personnel could have a material adverse impact on our business because of their skills, knowledge of our market, relationships in the communities we serve, years of industry experience and the difficulty of promptly finding qualified replacement personnel. Although we have employment agreements with certain of our executive officers, there is no guarantee that these officers and other key personnel will remain employed with the Company. We are a community bank and our ability to maintain our reputation is critical to the success of our business and the failure to do so may materially adversely affect our performance. Our reputation is one of the most valuable components of our business. As such, we strive to conduct our business in a manner that enhances our reputation. This is done, in part, by recruiting, hiring and retaining employees who share our core values of being an integral part of the communities we serve, delivering superior service to our customers and caring about our customers and associates. Threats to our reputation can come from many sources, including adverse sentiment about financial institutions generally, unethical practices, employee misconduct, failure to deliver minimum standards of service or quality, compliance deficiencies, and questionable or fraudulent activities of our customers. Negative publicity regarding our business, employees, or customers, with or without merit, may result in the loss of customers, investors and employees, costly litigation, a decline in revenues and increased governmental regulation. If our reputation is negatively affected, by the actions of our employees or otherwise, our business and, therefore, our operating results may be materially adversely affected. Our risk management framework may not be effective in mitigating risks and / or losses to us. Our risk management framework is comprised of various processes, systems and strategies, and is designed to manage the types of risk to which we are subject, including, among others, credit, market, liquidity, interest rate and compliance. Our framework also includes financial or other modeling methodologies that involve management assumptions and judgment. Our risk management framework may not be effective under all circumstances and may not adequately mitigate any risk or loss to us. If our risk management framework is not effective, we could suffer unexpected losses and our business, financial condition, results of operations or growth prospects could be materially and adversely affected. We may also be subject

to potentially adverse regulatory consequences. The financial services market is undergoing rapid technological changes, and if we are unable to stay current with those changes, we will not be able to effectively compete. The financial services market is undergoing rapid technological changes with frequent introductions of new technology- driven products and services (including those related to or involving artificial intelligence, machine learning, blockchain and other distributed ledger technologies), and an established and growing demand for mobile and other phone and computer banking applications. In addition to better serving customers, the effective use of technology increases efficiency and enables financial institutions to reduce costs. Our future success will depend, in part, on our ability to keep pace with the technological changes and to use technology to satisfy and grow customer demand for our products and services that will satisfy customer demands for convenience as well as to create additional efficiencies in our operations as we continue to grow and expand our market area. We expect that we will need to make substantial investments in our technology and information systems to compete effectively and to stay current with technological changes. Many of our larger competitors have substantially greater resources to invest in technological improvements and have invested significantly more than us in technological improvements. As a result, they may be able to invest more heavily in developing and adopting new technologies, and offer additional or more convenient products compared to those that we will be able to provide, which would put us at a competitive disadvantage. Accordingly, we may not be able to effectively implement new technology- driven products and services or be successful in marketing these products and services to our customers, which could impair our growth and profitability. As a result, our ability to effectively compete to retain or acquire new business may be impaired, and the failure to successfully keep pace with technological change affecting the financial services industry could have a material adverse impact on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

System ~~failure~~ **failures** or ~~breaches~~ **disruptions** of our network security, or the security of our data processing subsidiary, including as a result of cyberattacks or data security ~~breaches~~ **incidents**, could subject us to increased operating costs as well as litigation and other liabilities. The computer systems and network infrastructure we use, **including those we maintain with our service providers and vendors**, could be vulnerable to hardware and cyber security issues. Our operations are dependent upon our ability to protect our computer equipment against damage from fire, power loss, telecommunications failure, natural disasters such as earthquakes, tornadoes and hurricanes, or a similar catastrophic event. We could also experience a ~~breach~~ **cybersecurity incident** by intentional or negligent conduct on the part of employees or other internal or external sources, including our third- party vendors and cyber criminals **through, for example, phishing attempts, brute force attacks, denial of service attacks, viruses or other malicious code, exploiting software vulnerabilities (including " zero- day attacks"), ransomware or other malware and supply chain attacks and other disruptive problems caused by criminal threat actors**.

. Any damage or failure that causes an interruption in our operations could have an adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations. In addition, our operations are dependent upon our ability to protect the computer systems and network infrastructure utilized by us, including our internet banking activities, against damage from physical break- ins, cyber security ~~breaches~~ **attacks** and other disruptive problems caused by ~~the internet or~~ **criminal threat actors. Such cyberattacks and other technology users. Such computer break- ins, breaches and other** disruptions would jeopardize the security of information stored in and transmitted through our computer systems and network infrastructure, **and those maintained by our service providers and vendors**, which may result in significant liability, damage our reputation and inhibit the use of our internet banking services by current and potential customers, any of which may result in a material adverse impact on our financial condition, results of operations or the market price of our common stock. As cyber threats continue to evolve, we may be required to expend significant additional resources to continue to modify or enhance our protective measures or to investigate and remediate any information security vulnerabilities. In addition, as the regulatory environment related to information security, data collection and use, and privacy becomes increasingly rigorous, with new and constantly changing requirements applicable to our business, compliance with those requirements could also result in additional costs. We are under continuous threat of loss due to ~~hacking and~~ cyberattacks especially as we continue to expand client capabilities to utilize internet and other remote channels to transact business. These cyber risks include ~~greater~~ **increased** phishing, malware, and other cybersecurity attacks **described above**, vulnerability to disruptions of our information technology infrastructure and telecommunications systems for remote operations, increased risk of unauthorized dissemination of confidential information, limited ability to restore the systems in the event of a systems failure or interruption, greater risk of a ~~security~~ **cybersecurity breach incident** resulting in destruction or misuse of valuable information, and potential impairment of our ability to perform critical functions, including wiring funds, all of which could expose us to risks of data or financial loss, **increased operational expenses, reputational damage, damaged customer relationships, diversion of the attention of management away from the operation of our business, increased cybersecurity protection and remediation costs, regulatory scrutiny, sanctions, fines or penalties (which may not be covered by our insurance policies), release of sensitive and / or confidential information**. litigation and liability and could seriously disrupt our operations and the operations of any impacted customers. To date, none of foregoing types of attacks have had a material effect on our business or operations and we maintain a system of internal controls and insurance coverage to mitigate against operational risks, including data processing system failures and errors and customer or employee fraud. However, no assurances can be provided that we may not suffer from such an attack in the future that may cause us material harm, especially in light of the risks being posed by changing technologies as well as ~~criminal intent on committing cyber- crime~~ **the increased sophistication and activities of cybercriminals**. Our operations could be interrupted if our third- party service providers experience difficulty, terminate their services or fail to comply with banking regulations. We depend to a significant extent on a number of relationships with third- party service providers. Specifically, we receive core systems processing, essential web hosting, deposit processing and other processing services from third- party service providers. If these third- party service providers experience financial, operational (including as a result of a cybersecurity incident), or technological difficulties or terminate their services and we are unable to replace them with other suitable service providers, our operations could be interrupted. If an interruption were to continue for a significant period of time, our business, financial condition and results of

operations could be adversely affected, perhaps materially. Even if we are able to replace our service providers, it may be at a higher cost to us, which could adversely affect our business, reputation, financial condition and results of operations. We are subject to certain operational risks, including, but not limited to, client or employee fraud and data processing system failures and errors. Employee errors and employee and client misconduct could subject us to financial losses or regulatory sanctions and seriously harm our reputation. Misconduct by our employees could include hiding unauthorized activities from us, improper or unauthorized activities on behalf of our clients or improper use of confidential information. It is not always possible to prevent employee errors and misconduct, and the precautions we take to prevent and detect this activity may not be effective in all cases. Employee errors could also subject us to financial claims for negligence. We maintain a system of internal controls and insurance coverage to mitigate against operational risks. If our internal controls fail to prevent or detect an occurrence, or if any resulting loss is not insured or exceeds applicable insurance limits, it could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. In addition, we rely heavily upon information supplied by third parties, including the information contained in credit applications, property appraisals, title information, equipment pricing and valuation and employment and income documentation, in deciding which loans we will originate, as well as the terms of those loans. If any of the information upon which we rely is misrepresented, either fraudulently or inadvertently, and the misrepresentation is not detected prior to asset funding, the value of the asset may be significantly lower than expected, or we may fund a loan that we would not have funded or on terms we would not have extended.

The development and use of artificial intelligence (AI) presents risks and challenges that may adversely impact our business. The Company or its third- party (or fourth party) vendors, clients or counterparties may develop or incorporate AI technology in certain business processes, services, or products. The development and use of AI presents a number of risks and challenges to the Company's business. The legal and regulatory environment relating to AI is uncertain and rapidly evolving, both in the U. S. and internationally, and includes regulatory schemes targeted specifically at AI as well as provisions in intellectual property, privacy, consumer protection, employment, and other laws applicable to the use of AI. These evolving laws and regulations could require changes in the Company's implementation of AI technology and increase the Company's compliance costs and the risk of non-compliance. AI models, particularly generative AI models, may produce output or take action that is incorrect, that reflects biases included in the data on which they are trained, that results in the release of private, confidential, or proprietary information, that infringes on the intellectual property rights of others, or that is otherwise harmful. In addition, the complexity of many AI models makes it difficult to understand why they are generating particular outputs. This limited transparency increases the challenges associated with assessing the proper operation of AI models, understanding and monitoring the capabilities of the AI models, reducing erroneous output, eliminating bias, and complying with regulations that require documentation or explanation of the basis on which decisions are made. Further, the Company may rely on AI models developed by third parties, and, to that extent, would be dependent in part on the manner in which those third parties develop and train their models, including risks arising from the inclusion of any unauthorized material in the training data for their models and the effectiveness of the steps these third parties have taken to limit the risks associated with the output of their models, matters over which the Company may have limited visibility. Any of these risks could expose the Company to liability or adverse legal or regulatory consequences and harm the Company's reputation and the public perception of its business or the effectiveness of its security measures.

Our accounting estimates and risk management processes rely on analytical and forecasting models. Processes that management uses to estimate our probable incurred credit losses and to measure the fair value of financial instruments, as well as the processes used to estimate the effects of changing interest rates and other market measures on our financial condition and results of operations, depend upon the use of analytical and forecasting models. These models reflect assumptions that may not be accurate, particularly in times of market stress or other unforeseen circumstances. Even if these assumptions are accurate, the models may prove to be inadequate or inaccurate because of other flaws in their design or their implementation. If the models that management uses for interest rate risk and asset liability management are inadequate, we may incur increased or unexpected losses upon changes in market interest rates or other market measures. If the models that management uses for determining our probable credit losses are inadequate, the allowance for credit losses may not be sufficient to support future charge offs. If the models that management uses to measure the fair value of financial instruments are inadequate, the fair value of such financial instruments may fluctuate unexpectedly or may not accurately reflect what we could realize upon sale or settlement of such financial instruments. Any such failure in management's analytical or forecasting models could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. Changes in accounting standards could materially impact our financial statements. From time to time, the FASB or the Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC, may change the financial accounting and reporting standards that govern the preparation of our financial statements. Such changes may result in us being subject to new or changing accounting and reporting standards. In addition, the bodies that interpret the accounting standards (such as banking regulators or outside auditors) may change their interpretations or positions on how these standards should be applied. These changes may be beyond our control, can be hard to predict and can materially impact how we record and report our financial condition and results of operations. In some cases, we could be required to apply a new or revised standard retrospectively, or apply an existing standard differently, also retrospectively, in each case resulting in our needing to revise or restate prior period financial statements. Failure to maintain effective internal controls over financial reporting could have a material adverse effect on our business and stock price. Management regularly monitors, reviews and updates our disclosure controls and procedures, including our internal control over financial reporting. Any system of controls, however well designed and operated, is based in part on certain assumptions and can provide only reasonable assurances that the controls will be effective. Any failure or circumvention of our controls and procedures or failure to comply with regulations related to controls and procedures could have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition. Failure to achieve and maintain an effective internal control environment could prevent us from accurately reporting

our financial results, preventing or detecting fraud or providing timely and reliable financial information pursuant to our reporting obligations, which could result in a material weakness in our internal controls over financial reporting and the restatement of previously filed financial statements and could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. Further, ineffective internal controls could cause our investors to lose confidence in our financial information, which could affect the trading price of our common stock. We may be adversely affected by the soundness of other financial institutions. Financial services institutions are interrelated as a result of trading, clearing, counterparty, or other relationships. We have exposure to many different industries and counterparties and routinely execute transactions with counterparties in the financial services industry, including commercial banks, brokers and dealers, investment banks, and other institutional clients. Many of these transactions expose us to credit risk in the event of a default by a counterparty or client. In addition, our credit risk may be exacerbated when the collateral held by us cannot be realized or is liquidated at prices insufficient to recover the full amount of the loan or derivative exposure due to us. There is no assurance that any such losses would not materially and adversely affect our results of operations or earnings. Hurricanes or other adverse weather events would negatively affect our local economies or disrupt our operations, which would have an adverse effect on our business or results of operations. Our market area is located in the southeastern region of the United States and is susceptible to natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, tropical storms, other severe weather events and related flooding and wind damage, and man-made disasters. These natural disasters could negatively impact regional economic conditions, cause a decline in the value or destruction of mortgaged properties and an increase in the risk of delinquencies, foreclosures or loss on loans originated by us, damage our banking facilities and offices and negatively impact our growth strategy. Climate change may be increasing the nature, severity and frequency of adverse weather conditions, making the impact from these types of natural disasters on us or our customers worse. Such weather events can disrupt operations, result in damage to properties and negatively affect the local economies in the markets where they operate. We cannot predict whether or to what extent damage that may be caused by future hurricanes or tornadoes will affect our operations or the economies in our current or future market areas, but such weather events could negatively impact economic conditions in these regions and result in a decline in local loan demand and loan originations, a decline in the value or destruction of properties securing our loans and an increase in delinquencies, foreclosures or loan losses. Our business or results of operations may be adversely affected by these and other negative effects of natural or man-made disasters. We may need to rely on the financial markets to provide needed capital. Our common stock is listed and traded on the **NASDAQ Global Market New York Stock Exchange**. If our capital resources prove in the future to be inadequate to meet our capital requirements, we may need to raise additional debt or equity capital. If conditions in the capital markets are not favorable, we may be constrained in raising capital, and an inability to raise additional capital on acceptable terms when and if needed could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations. The interest rates that we pay on our securities are also influenced by, among other things, the credit ratings that we, our affiliates and / or our securities receive from recognized rating agencies. Our credit ratings are based on a number of factors, including our financial strength and some factors not entirely within our control such as conditions affecting the financial services industry generally, and remain subject to change at any time. A downgrade to the credit rating of us or our affiliates could affect our ability to access the capital markets, increase our borrowing costs and negatively impact our profitability. A downgrade to us, our affiliates or our securities could create obligations or liabilities to us under the terms of our outstanding securities that could increase our costs or otherwise have a negative effect on our results of operations or financial condition. Additionally, a downgrade to the credit rating of any particular security issued by us or our affiliates could negatively affect the ability of the holders of that security to sell the securities and the prices at which any such securities may be sold. Because our decision to incur debt and issue securities in future offerings will depend on market conditions and other factors beyond our control, we cannot predict or estimate the amount, timing or nature of our future offerings and debt financings. Further, market conditions could require us to accept less favorable terms for the issuance of our securities in the future. In addition, geopolitical and worldwide market conditions may cause disruption or volatility in the U. S. equity and debt markets, which could hinder our ability to issue debt and equity securities in the future on favorable terms. The costs and effects of litigation, investigations or similar matters involving us or other financial institutions or counterparties, or adverse facts and developments related thereto, could materially affect our business, operating results and financial condition. We may be involved from time to time in a variety of litigation, investigations or similar matters arising out of our business. It is inherently difficult to assess the outcome of these matters, and we may not prevail in any proceedings or litigation. Our insurance may not cover all claims that may be asserted against us and indemnification rights to which we are entitled may not be honored, and any claims asserted against us, regardless of merit or eventual outcome, may harm our reputation. Should the ultimate judgments or settlements in any litigation or investigation significantly exceed our insurance coverage or to the extent that we incur civil money penalties that are not covered by insurance, they could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. In addition, premiums for insurance covering the financial and banking sectors are rising. We may not be able to obtain appropriate types or levels of insurance in the future, nor may we be able to obtain adequate replacement policies with acceptable terms or at historic rates, if at all. Finally, in recent years, a number of judicial decisions have upheld the right of borrowers to sue lending institutions on the basis of various evolving legal theories, collectively termed “ lender liability. ” Generally, lender liability is founded on the premise that a lender has either violated a duty, whether implied or contractual, of good faith and fair dealing owed to the borrower or has assumed a degree of control over the borrower resulting in the creation of a fiduciary duty owed to the borrower or its other creditors or shareholders. We **have been and in the future** could become subject to claims based on this or other evolving legal theories . **Further, banking institutions are also increasingly the target of class action lawsuits, including claims alleging deceptive practices or violations of account terms in connection with non- sufficient funds or overdraft charges and violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). We manage these future risks through internal controls, personnel training, insurance, litigation management, our compliance and ethics processes, and other**

means. However, the commencement, outcome, and magnitude of litigation cannot be predicted or controlled with any certainty.

Risks Related to Legislative and Regulatory Events We are subject to extensive government regulation that could limit or restrict our activities, which in turn may adversely impact our ability to increase our assets and earnings. We operate in a highly regulated environment and are subject to supervision and regulation by a number of governmental regulatory agencies, including the Federal Reserve, the Georgia Department of Banking and Finance (“DBF”) and the FDIC. Regulations adopted by these agencies, which are generally intended to provide protection for depositors and customers rather than for the benefit of shareholders, govern a comprehensive range of matters relating to ownership and control of our shares, our acquisition of other companies and businesses, permissible activities for us to engage in, maintenance of adequate capital levels, and other aspects of our operations. These bank regulators possess broad authority to prevent or remedy unsafe or unsound practices or violations of law. The laws and regulations applicable to the banking industry could change at any time and we cannot predict the effects of these changes on our business, profitability or growth strategy. Increased regulation could increase our cost of compliance and adversely affect profitability. Moreover, certain of these regulations contain significant punitive sanctions for violations, including monetary penalties and limitations on a bank’s ability to implement components of its business plan, such as expansion through mergers and acquisitions or the opening of new branch offices. In addition, changes in regulatory requirements may add costs associated with compliance efforts. Furthermore, government policy and regulation, particularly as implemented through the Federal Reserve System, significantly affect credit conditions. Negative developments in the financial industry and the impact of new legislation and regulation in response to those developments could negatively impact our business operations and adversely impact our financial performance. See “Item 1- Business- Supervision and Regulation” for more information on the extensive regulation and supervision the Company and the Bank are subject to. Federal and state regulators periodically examine our business, and we may be required to remediate adverse examination findings. The Federal Reserve, the FDIC, and the DBF periodically examine our business, including our compliance with laws and regulations. If, as a result of an examination, a banking agency were to determine that our financial condition, capital resources, asset quality, earnings prospects, management, liquidity, interest rate sensitivity or other aspects of any of our operations had become unsatisfactory, or that we were in violation of any law or regulation, they may take a number of different remedial actions as they deem appropriate. These actions include the power to enjoin “unsafe or unsound” practices, to require affirmative action to correct any conditions resulting from any violation or practice, to issue an administrative order that can be judicially enforced, to direct an increase in our capital, to restrict our growth, to assess civil money penalties, to fine or remove officers and directors and, if it is concluded that such conditions cannot be corrected or there is an imminent risk of loss to depositors, to terminate our deposit insurance and place us into receivership or conservatorship. Any regulatory action against us could have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. We are subject to federal and state fair lending laws, and failure to comply with these laws could lead to material penalties. Federal and state fair lending laws and regulations, such as the Equal Credit Opportunity Act and the Fair Housing Act, impose nondiscriminatory lending requirements on financial institutions. The Department of Justice, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (“CFPB”) and other federal and state agencies are responsible for enforcing these laws and regulations. Private parties may also have the ability to challenge an institution’s performance under fair lending laws in private class action litigation. A successful challenge to our performance under the fair lending laws and regulations could adversely impact our rating under the Community Reinvestment Act and result in a wide variety of sanctions, including the required payment of damages and civil money penalties, injunctive relief, imposition of restrictions on merger and acquisition activity and restrictions on expansion activity, which could negatively impact our reputation, business, financial condition and results of operations. We could face a risk of noncompliance and enforcement action with the Bank Secrecy Act and other anti- money laundering statutes and regulations. The Bank Secrecy Act of 1970, the USA PATRIOT Act and other laws and regulations require financial institutions, among other duties, to institute and maintain effective anti- money laundering programs and file suspicious activity and currency transaction reports as appropriate. FinCEN, established by the U. S. Department of the Treasury to administer the Bank Secrecy Act, is authorized to impose significant civil money penalties for violations of those requirements and engages in coordinated enforcement efforts with the individual federal banking regulators, as well as the U. S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration and IRS. There is also increased scrutiny of compliance with the rules enforced by OFAC related to U. S. sanctions regimes. If our policies, procedures and systems are deemed deficient or the policies, procedures and systems of the financial institutions that we have already acquired or may acquire in the future are deficient, we would be subject to liability, including fines and regulatory actions such as restrictions on our ability to pay dividends and the necessity to obtain regulatory approvals to proceed with certain aspects of our business plan, including our acquisition plans, which would negatively impact our business, financial condition and results of operations. Failure to maintain and implement adequate programs to combat money laundering and terrorist financing could also have serious reputational consequences for us. Our deposit insurance premiums could be substantially higher in the future, which could have a material adverse effect on our future earnings. The FDIC insures deposits at FDIC- insured depository institutions, such as the Bank, up to applicable limits. The amount of a particular institution’s deposit insurance assessment is based on that institution’s risk classification under an FDIC risk- based assessment system. An institution’s risk classification is assigned based on its capital levels and the level of supervisory concern the institution poses to its regulators. We are generally unable to control the amount of premiums that we are required to pay for FDIC insurance. Any future additional assessments, increases or required prepayments in FDIC insurance premiums could reduce our profitability, may limit our ability to pursue certain business opportunities or otherwise negatively impact our operations. Risks Related to Our Common Stock Our management team’s strategies for the enhancement of shareholder value may not succeed. Our management team is taking and considering actions to enhance shareholder value, including reviewing personnel, developing new products, issuing dividends and exploring acquisition opportunities. These actions may not enhance shareholder value. For example, holders of our common stock are only entitled to receive such dividends as our Board of Directors may declare out of funds legally available for such

payments. We are not legally required to do so. Further, the Federal Reserve could decide at any time that paying any dividends on our common stock could be an unsafe or unsound banking practice. The reduction or elimination of dividends paid on our common stock could adversely affect the market price of our common stock. An investment in our common stock is not an insured deposit and may lose value. An investment in our common stock is not a bank deposit and, therefore, is not insured against loss by the FDIC, any other deposit insurance fund or by any other public or private entity. Investment in our common stock is inherently risky for the reasons described herein, and is subject to the same market forces that affect the price of common stock in any company. As a result, if you acquire our common stock, you could lose some or all of your investment. Our stock price may be volatile. The market price of our common stock may be volatile and could be subject to wide fluctuations in price in response to various factors, some of which are beyond our control, including the failure of securities analysts to cover our common stock, **rising fluctuations in** interest rates and the impact of inflation. In addition, if the market for stocks in our industry, or the stock market in general, experiences a loss of investor confidence, the trading price of our common stock could decline for reasons unrelated to our business, financial condition or results of operations. If any of the foregoing occurs, it could cause our stock price to fall and may expose us to lawsuits that, even if unsuccessful, could be costly to defend and a distraction to management which could materially adversely affect our business, financial condition or results of operations. **Environmental, social and governance ("ESG") and diversity, equity and inclusion ("DEI")** risks could adversely affect our reputation and shareholder, employee, client and third-party relationships and may negatively affect our stock price. Our business faces increasing public **investor, activist, legislative and regulatory** scrutiny related to **environmental, social and governance ("ESG"), anti-ESG, DEI and anti-DEI activities and developments**. We risk damage to our brand and reputation if we fail to act responsibly in a number of areas, such as diversity, equity, inclusion, environmental stewardship, human capital management, support for our local communities, corporate governance and transparency, or fail to consider ESG factors in our business operations. Furthermore, as a result of our diverse base of clients and business partners, we may face potential negative publicity based on the identity of our clients or business partners and the public's (or certain segments of the public's) view of those entities. Such publicity may arise from traditional media sources or from social media and may increase rapidly in size and scope. If our client or business partner relationships were to become intertwined in such negative publicity, our ability to attract and retain clients, business partners, and employees may be negatively impacted, and our stock price may also be negatively impacted. Additionally, we may face pressure to not do business in certain industries that are viewed as harmful to the environment or are otherwise negatively perceived, which could impact our growth. Additionally, investors and shareholder advocates are placing ever increasing emphasis on how corporations address ESG issues in their business strategy when making investment decisions and when developing their investment theses and proxy recommendations. We may incur meaningful costs with respect to our ESG efforts and if such efforts are negatively perceived, our reputation and stock price may suffer. **In addition response to ESG developments (including ongoing in particular DEI initiatives), there are increasing instances of anti-ESG legislative legislation or and anti-DEI executive orders, adverse media coverage, regulatory regulation uncertainties, and changes regarding climate litigation that could have unintended impacts on ordinary banking operations and increase litigation or reputational risk management related to actions we choose to take and practices may impact the result results of our operations. If legislatures in higher regulatory, compliance, credit the states in which we operate adopt legislation intended to protect certain industries by limiting or prohibiting consideration of business and reputational risks and costs industry factors in lending activities, certain portions of our lending operations may be impacted.** Our dividend policy may change, and consequently, your only opportunity to achieve a return on your investment may be if the price of our common stock appreciates. We have historically paid quarterly dividends to our shareholders. However, we have no obligation to pay dividends and we may change our dividend policy at any time without notice to our shareholders. Holders of our common stock are only entitled to receive such cash dividends as our board of directors, in its discretion, may declare out of funds legally available for such payments. Furthermore, consistent with our strategic plans, growth initiatives, capital availability and requirements, projected liquidity needs, financial condition, and other factors, we have made, and will continue to make, capital management decisions and policies that could adversely impact the amount of dividends paid to our shareholders. We are a separate and distinct legal entity from our subsidiary, the Bank. We receive substantially all of our revenue from dividends from the Bank, which we use as the principal source of funds to pay our expenses. Various federal and / or state laws and regulations limit the amount of dividends that the Bank may pay us. Such limits are also tied to the earnings of our subsidiary. If the Bank does not receive regulatory approval or if the Bank's earnings are not sufficient to make dividend payments to us while maintaining adequate capital levels, our ability to pay our expenses and our business, financial condition or results of operations could be materially and adversely impacted. Future equity issuances could result in dilution, which could cause our common stock price to decline. We are generally not restricted from issuing additional shares of our common stock up to the authorized number of shares set forth in our charter. We may issue additional shares of our common stock or securities convertible into our common stock in the future pursuant to current or future employee stock option plans, employee stock grants, upon exercise of warrants or in connection with future acquisitions or financings. We cannot predict the size of any such future issuances or the effect, if any, that any such future issuances will have on the trading price of our common stock. Any such future issuances of shares of our common stock or securities convertible into common stock may have a dilutive effect on the holders of our common stock and could have a material negative effect on the trading price of our common stock. In addition, we may sell additional shares of our common stock in public offerings, and issue additional shares of common stock or convertible securities to finance future acquisitions. We cannot predict the size of future issuances of our common stock or the effect, if any, that future issuances and sales of our common stock will have on the market price of our common stock. Sales of substantial amounts of our common stock (including shares that may be issued in connection with acquisitions), or the perception that such issuance could occur, may adversely affect prevailing market prices for our common stock. We have the ability to incur debt and pledge our assets, including our

stock in the Bank, to secure that debt. We have the ability to incur debt and pledge our assets to secure that debt. Absent special and unusual circumstances, a holder of indebtedness for borrowed money has rights that are superior to those of holders of common stock. For example, interest must be paid to the lender before dividends can be paid to the shareholders, and loans must be paid off before any assets can be distributed to shareholders if we were to liquidate. Furthermore, we would have to make principal and interest payments on our indebtedness, which could reduce our profitability or result in net losses on a consolidated basis even if the Bank were profitable.