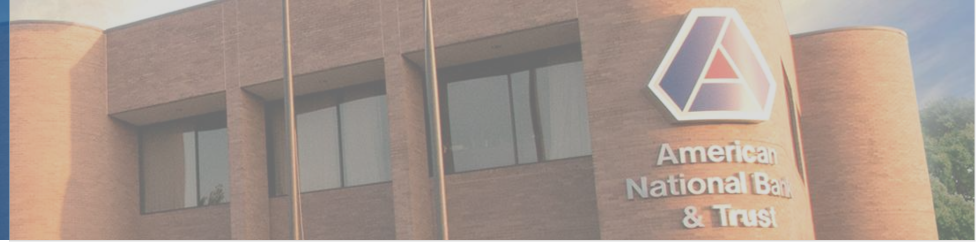
April Market Update

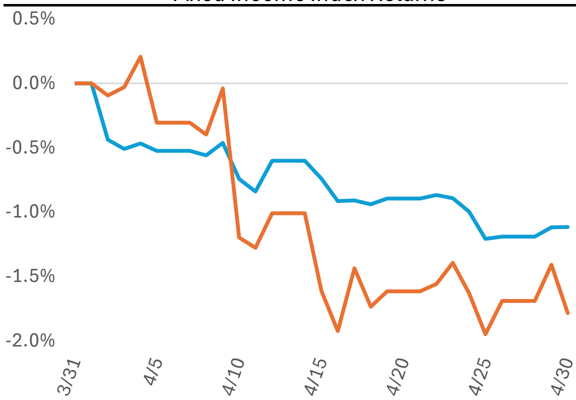
As of 4/30/24 | amnat.com



Macro & Market View: Pre-Earnings Caution

Interest rate policy uncertainty, domestic and international growth, the U.S. consumer, and inflation have contributed to recent negative returns in broad fixed income benchmarks as well as negative returns in broad equity benchmarks shown below. For this month, we have seen equity markets decline for the three broad US indices, while correlations have been 83% and 73% for the aggregate and municipal bond markets, respectively. Historically, April has generated a positive equity market return of 1.93% on average; however, the market had a below average return of -3.89% for the month.

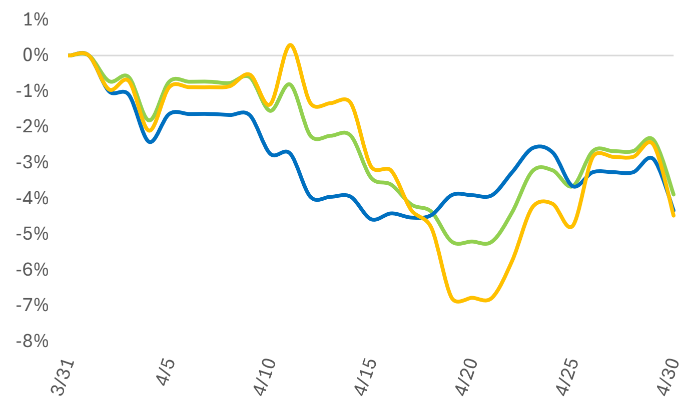
Fixed Income Index Returns



April Returns

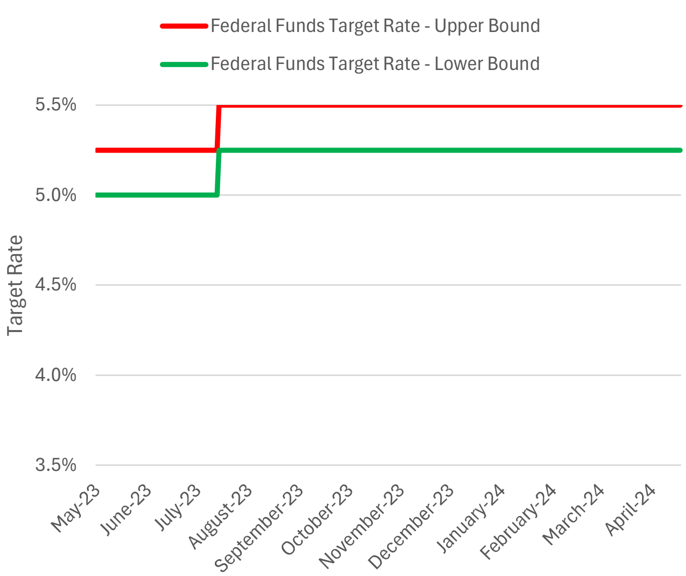
US Aggregate	-1.79%
US Municipal	-1.12%
S&P 500	-3.89%
Dow Jones 30	-4.34%
Nasdaq Comp	-4.48%

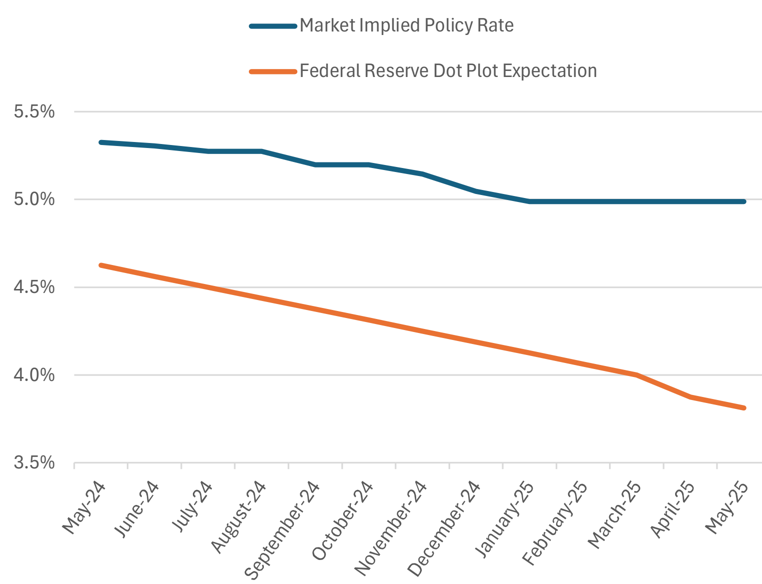
Equity Index Returns



Source: Bloomberg LP

Market participants are forecasting the Fed policy rate that sets interest rates for the economy to be lowered over the next twelve months. An important note is that market participants expect rates to be higher than the Fed's expectation for this year. The next Federal Reserve meeting to discuss monetary policy is scheduled for June. The overall expectation is for the policy rate to be lowered by around 34 basis points (actual estimate of -0.3%) to 4.99% in the next twelve months. The change in market participants' view of what the Federal Reserve should do can be explained by the inflation data measured by CPI (Consumer Price Index).





Source: Bloomberg LP

Wichita Falls
2732 Midwestern Pkwy
Wichita Falls, TX 76308
(940) 397-2420

Fort Worth
1500 W 7th
Fort Worth, TX 76102
(817) 505-1534

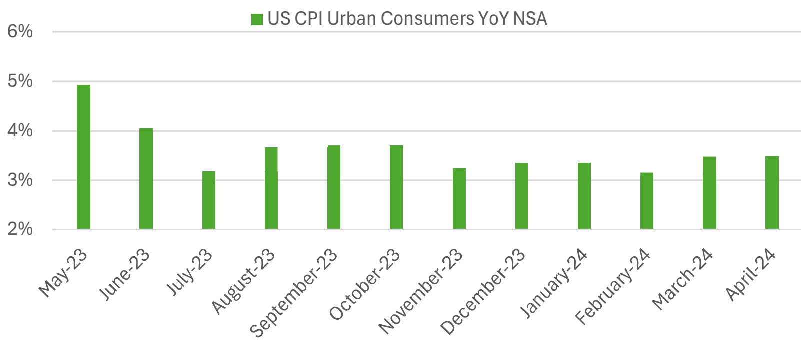
Flower Mound
1201 Cross Timbers Rd
Flower Mound, TX 75028
(469) 322-6202

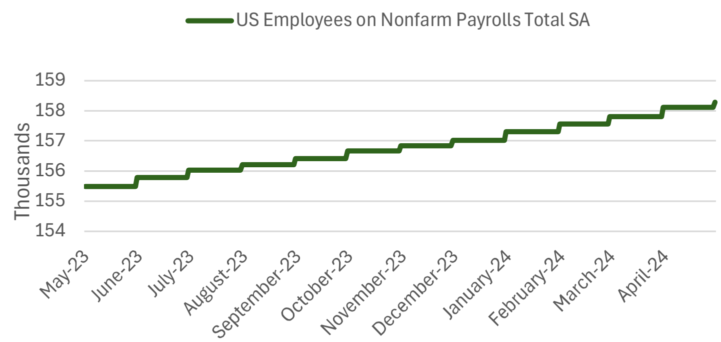
Houston
1235 North Loop West, Suite 907
Houston, TX 77008
(713) 913-0972

Denton
120 S. Carroll Blvd
Denton, TX 76201
(469) 322-6202

McKinney
205 W. Louisiana St, Suite 103
McKinney, TX 75069
(214) 307-1664

Dallas
10000 N. Central Expressway, Suite 800
Dallas, TX 75231
(214) 534-1766

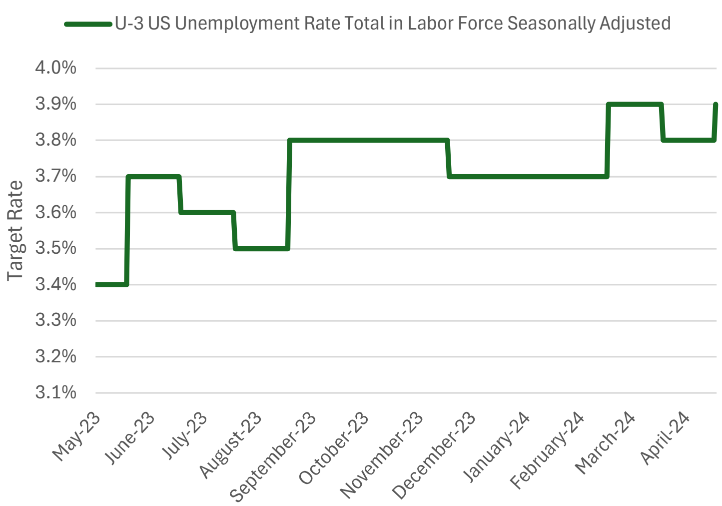


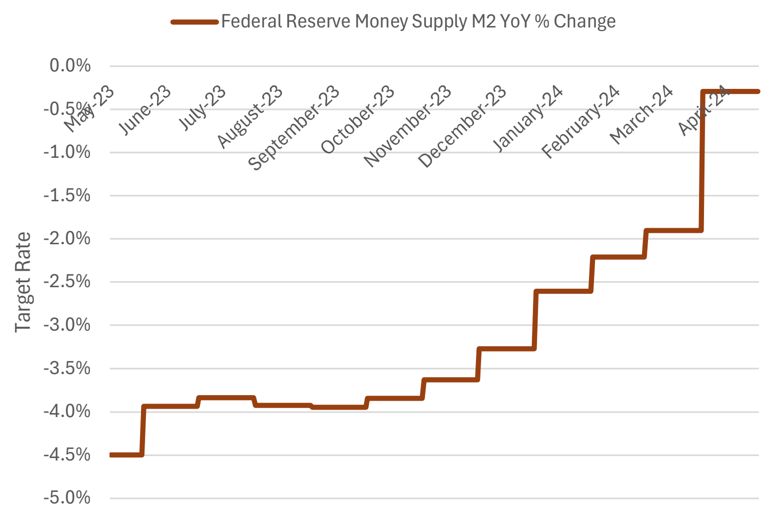


Source: Bloomberg LP

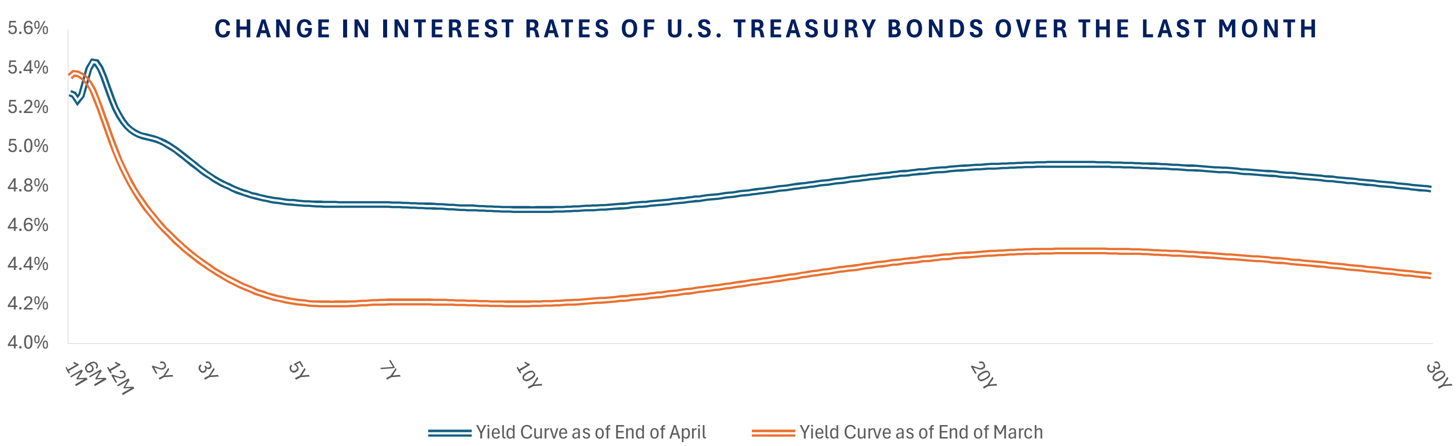
As shown in the US CPI Consumers year-over-year chart above, April experienced downward trending inflation over the last year and, since February, an upward trend above the target at 3.25%. Additionally, nonfarm payrolls continue to trend upward, which influences whether or not the Federal Reserve will continue raising interest rates. However, as the data shows, the downward inflation improvements in CPI to the Fed target of 2.5% has given market participants hope that the period of climbing interest rates is nearing the end. Historically, the inverted treasury yield curve signalled the economy was near a recession, but as noted in our March Market Update, broad consumption has continued to strengthen and has bolstered the economy.

The chart below shows the unemployment rate sitting at 3.9%, an increase from 3.4% one year ago. We also include the year-over-year change in the money supply remaining in negative territory over the last year, but bottoming from the low in April 2023. Money supply leads inflation, loosely following the general trend in past economic cycles. This relationship suggests that the current downtrend in inflation may stay above the Fed's target level until we see an adjustment in economic data.





Source: Bloomberg LP



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Across the sectors, company reporting has shown a positive surprise across the spectrum to sales and earnings for April with the exception of negative surprise in the Utilities and Consumer Staples sectors. For April, of the 271 companies that reported in the S&P 500, 148 of the companies had positive sales surprise and 214 of them had positive earnings surprise; we consider this positive surprise to be a tailwind for equity valuations for the next quarter. For the 271 companies, the overall sales and earnings surprise is positive 1.46% and 9.18%, respectively for April with companies being more resilient than consensus analyst estimates.

For our portfolios we blend fixed income with dynamic equity strategies. Below are the top and bottom three performers per strategy. Our Legacy portfolio focuses on blending long-term growth and value on a discretionary basis, while our Dividend portfolio seeks lower volatility and higher current income. We also have Momentum and Quality strategies that are factor-driven, smart beta portfolios. The Momentum portfolio dynamically adjusts positions to benefit from positive momentum while remaining diversified. The Quality portfolio blends low volatility with the momentum factor to produce a portfolio focused on high quality equity income and positive momentum. Benjamin Builder solutions complement the other equity strategies and offer an efficient method to invest broadly across geography, style, and sector using a dynamic fund screening process.

The Three Best and Worst Investments during the Month

	Legacy Portfolio		Dividend Portfolio		Momentum Portfolio		Quality Portfolio	
Best	GOOGL	7.85%	DPZ	6.52%	CACI	6.18%	DPZ	6.52%
	NEE	4.79%	KMB	5.55%	FSLR	4.44%	FSLR	4.44%
	TSLA	4.26%	WSO	3.65%	PM	3.62%	PM	3.62%
Worst	HD	-12.87%	LECO	-14.06%	MSCI	-16.89%	SLB	-13.37%
	BA	-13.03%	GGG	-14.19%	SEDG	-17.37%	VEEV	-14.30%
	ACN	-13.18%	SIRI	-24.23%	WSC	-20.52%	MSCI	-16.89%

	Benjamin Builder Solutions	
Best	BCD	2.66%
	FUTY	1.60%
	VWO	0.96%
Worst	VBK	-7.29%
	XLRE	-8.45%
	DTRE	-10.31%

Market participants reviewed economic data, and the futures market continued to bet on interest rates staying higher with the Federal Reserve continuing their rate cut narrative. To minimize the risk of cutting rates and inflation resurging above target similar to the 1980's, the Federal Reserve Chairman continues to emphasize that economic data show that inflation is meeting and staying below target . Given that we continue to see the change in the money supply improving on a year-over-year basis while remaining negative, this trend signals that the current rate may need more time for economic data to validate the economic picture. Monetary policy will be dictated by inflation, the underlying economy, and the consumer. Finally, when we compare historical monthly returns for stocks and bonds over the last 5 decades, we can see the impact of diversification on portfolio volatility and income. As the perception is that interest rates will come down, corporate and municipal bonds provide a real rate of total return that includes current income and price appreciation. Much like how telecommunication led to the internet as we know it today, democratized artificial intelligence continues the innovation trend as technology empowers people to focus on efficiency; these factors lead us to blend value and growth investments across stocks and bonds that complement your financial goals and risk appetite. Thank you for your continued trust in allowing us to manage your financial assets. Please reach out to your administrator if you have any questions.

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