

EQT Corporation (EQT)

\$22.40 (As of 06/09/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$24.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:
Neutral

(Since: 07/08/20)

Prior Recommendation: Outperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:A

Value: B

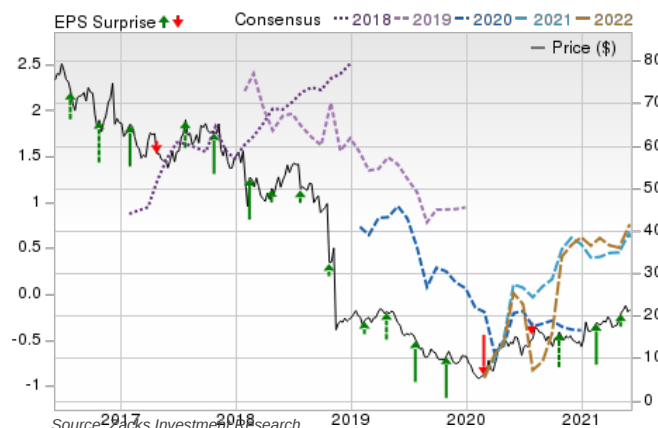
Growth: A

Momentum: C

Summary

EQT Corporation is a pure-play Appalachian explorer that produces the largest volume of natural gas in the United States. The company has a huge inventory of drilling locations in the core Appalachian Basin that could provide significant production volumes. Also, the firm is acquiring Alta Resources, which will likely add 1 Bcfe/d of net production to its portfolio. Notably, the company expects its 2021 free cash flow in the band of \$575-\$675 million. However, it projects 2021 operating costs at \$1.29 to \$1.41 per Mcfe. The upper end of the projected range is higher than the firm's 2020 per unit operating costs of \$1.36, hurting the company's bottom line. Also, the firm's ability to pay the near-term debt is raising questions. This is because EQT Corp. witnesses weakness in its operations, as reflected in its declining revenue trend.

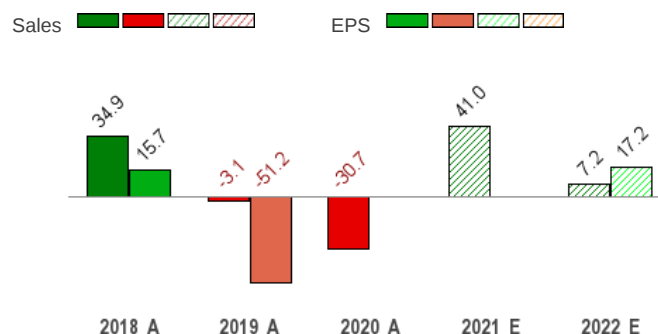
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$23.16 - \$10.52
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	3,582,159
Market Cap	\$6.3 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	76.2%
Beta	1.27
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.00 / 0.0%
Industry	Oil and Gas - Exploration and Production - United States
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 41% (102 out of 251)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	1,243 E	1,063 E	1,090 E	1,163 E	4,624 E
2021	950 A	1,005 E	1,056 E	1,183 E	4,313 E
2020	1,107 A	816 A	853 A	1,253 A	3,059 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	\$0.42 E	\$0.02 E	\$0.06 E	\$0.25 E	\$0.75 E
2021	\$0.30 A	\$0.04 E	\$0.06 E	\$0.25 E	\$0.64 E
2020	\$0.14 A	-\$0.18 A	-\$0.15 A	-\$0.02 A	-\$0.19 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

Last EPS Surprise	11.1%
Last Sales Surprise	-13.0%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	18.6%
Expected Report Date	07/26/2021
Earnings ESP	-90.7%
P/E TTM	NA
P/E F1	35.0
PEG F1	3.5
P/S TTM	2.2

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and sales estimates, is as of 06/09/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 06/10/2021.

Overview

Based in Pittsburgh, PA, EQT Corporation is primarily an explorer and producer of natural gas, with primary focus on the Appalachian Basin in Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The basin has been a major contributor to natural gas production growth in the United States. Notably, in terms of average daily sales volumes, EQT Corp is the largest natural gas producer in the domestic market.

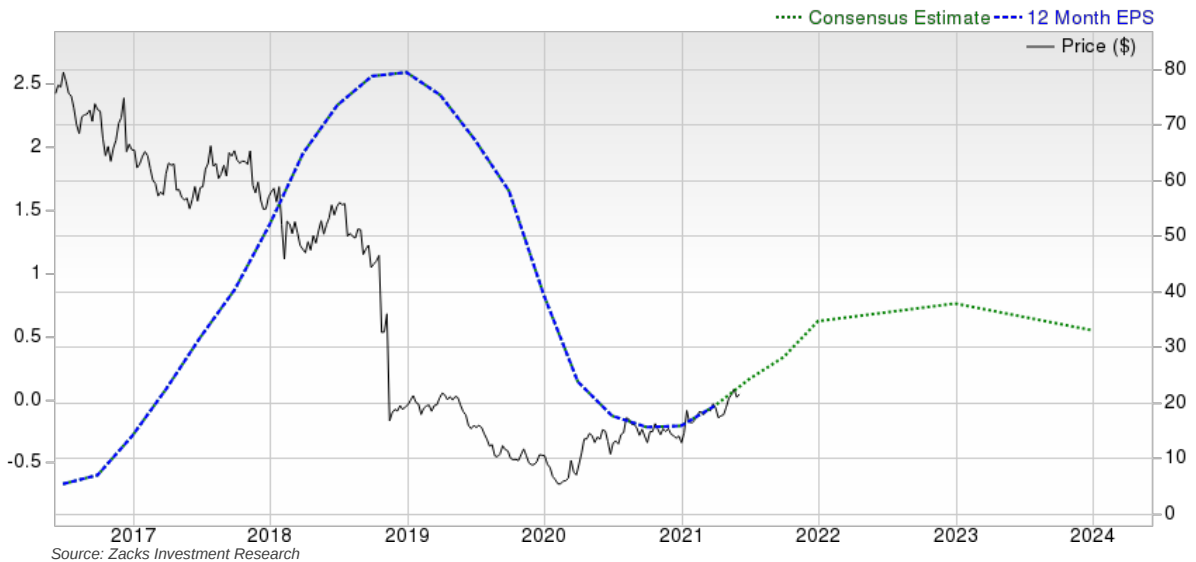
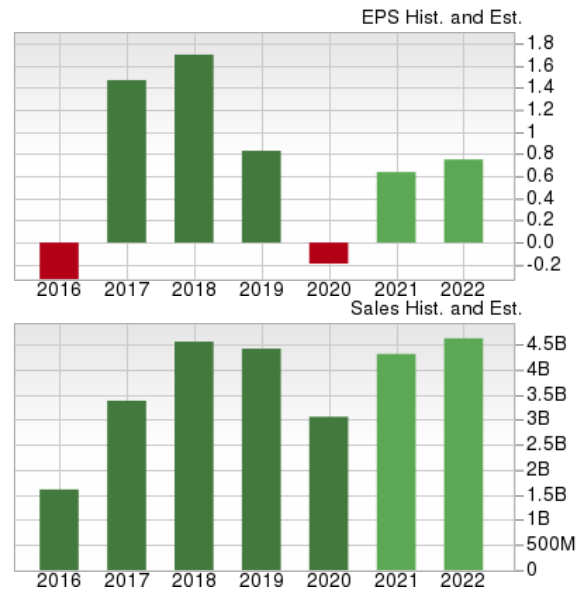
The upstream energy payer's operations in the basin spreads across 1.4 million gross acres, with proved oil and gas reserve potential of 21.8 trillion cubic feet equivalent (Tcfe). Importantly, the company's core resources in the Appalachian Basin comprises huge inventory of drilling locations that will fetch the company with oil and gas volumes over the next 15 to 20 years.

Investors should know that through 2019, the company has decided to spud 112 net wells. This comprises wells in the Marcellus shale play in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio that is likely to back the company's incremental production volumes in the years to come.

EQT Corp has set its strategic priorities to lower operating costs while maximizing production volumes. The company's priorities also involve maximizing returns from capital investments and increasing shareholders' returns while maintaining a strong balance sheet. It is to be noted that EQT Corp is the only company in the Appalachian Basin that is considered investment grade.

EQT Corp is also committed toward divesting non-core acres that don't complement the company's business. In 2018, the company divested non-core properties in the Permian Basin for a consideration of \$56.9 million. EQT Corp also divested 2.5 million of net acres in the Huron play as the company considered those assets as non-core.

At the end of 2020, the company had proved developed reserves of 19.8 trillion cubic feet equivalent, Of the total, 84.5% was located in the Marcellus region. Through 2020, the company produced 1,497,792 million cubic feet equivalent of natural gas. Of the total volumes, natural gas comprises more than 95%.



Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ EQT Corporation is a pure-play Appalachian explorer which is one of the largest natural gas producers in the United States. For operating in the prolific gas basin, the company employs advanced technologies like horizontal drilling. With huge production volumes of natural gas, the company is well placed to capitalize on the mounting demand for clean energy in the United States.
- ▲ The company has a huge inventory of drilling locations in the core Appalachian Basin that could provide significant production volumes. Importantly, in the core Marcellus resource, the company has 1,565 net undeveloped locations. The company also has 120 net undeveloped locations in the core Utica shale play. These undeveloped sites have brightened up the prospects of EQT Corporation's future natural gas production.
- ▲ EQT Corp closed a definitive purchase and sale agreement with Chevron Corporation. Thus, the leading natural gas producer acquired upstream and midstream assets of the integrated energy giant in the prolific Appalachian Basin for \$735 million. Thus, EQT Corp. has bolstered its core footings in the southwest Marcellus. The company expects the acquisition to prove accretive to free cash flow per share. Moreover, the company is acquiring Alta Resources Development, an Appalachian basin rival, for a total value of \$2.93 billion. The transaction — which is expected to conclude in the third quarter, will likely add 1 billion cubic feet equivalent (Bcfe) per day of net production to EQT Corporation's portfolio.
- ▲ The company completed the acquisition of some of the oil and gas assets from Reliance Marcellus for \$69 million. The acquired assets consist of nearly 40 MMcfe per day of natural gas production and 4,100 net acres in the core of the southwest Pennsylvania Marcellus. Notably, the company expects that the acquisition of the Marcellus wells would add 15 billion cubic feet of natural gas to its production estimates for 2021. Importantly, the company projects its 2021 free cash flow in the band of \$575-\$675 million, up from the previous guidance of \$500-\$600 million.

The company is expected to gain from its premium asset base in core Marcellus resources.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ As of Mar 31, 2021, the company had \$40.7 million in cash and cash equivalents. In comparison, the debt load is much higher at \$4,806 million, reflecting balance sheet weakness. Notably, although the company has lower debt exposure as compared to the composite stocks belonging to the industry, the natural gas explorer's ability to pay its near-term debt is in question. This is because the company witnesses weakness in its operations, as reflected in its declining revenue trend.
- ▼ The company projects 2021 total per unit operating costs at \$1.29 to \$1.41 per Mcfe. The upper end of the projected range is higher than the company's 2020 per unit operating costs of \$1.36. Increased operating costs can hurt the bottom line.
- ▼ The company's lack of geographic diversification is concerning, since its entire asset base is located in the Appalachian Basin. As such, it is more vulnerable to basin-specific delays and interruptions in production from wells, which can potentially hamper growth.
- ▼ Since EQT Corp's main source of income is the sale of natural gas and NGLs, a major risk which threatens its revenue is the volatile commodity market and the natural gas and NGLs price. Although the fuel prices have surged, the sudden rise in Covid-19 infections could affect the company's upstream business, thereby, hampering the company's ability to obtain the funding needed to conduct its operations.

Weak gas pricing scenario has been hurting the company's bottom line.

Last Earnings Report

EQT Corporation Beats Q1 Earnings, Revenues Miss

EQT Corporation reported first-quarter 2021 adjusted earnings from continuing operations of 30 cents per share, beating the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 27 cents and increasing from the year-ago figure of 15 cents. The strong first-quarter earnings were backed by increased gas equivalent production volumes and higher realized commodity price realizations. The positives were partially offset by higher processing expenses.

Total operating revenues decreased to \$949.9 million from \$1,107.1 million in the prior-year quarter. Moreover, the top line missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$1,082 million.

Quarter Ending 03/2021

Report Date	May 05, 2021
Sales Surprise	-12.99%
EPS Surprise	11.11%
Quarterly EPS	0.30
Annual EPS (TTM)	-0.05

Alta Resources Acquisition

EQT Corp. separately announced that it has agreed to acquire Alta Resources Development, an Appalachian basin rival, for a total value of \$2.93 billion. The transaction — which will significantly boost the acquirer's footprint in the basin — will include \$1 billion in cash and \$1.93 billion in EQT Corp. common stock. The deal, which is expected to conclude in the third quarter, will likely add 1 billion cubic feet equivalent (Bcfe) per day of net production to EQT Corp.'s portfolio.

Q1 Operations:

Production

Sales volumes increased to 415.2 Bcfe of natural gas from the year-ago figure of 385.1 Bcfe. Natural gas sales volume was 390.3 Bcf for the first quarter, up from 369.7 Bcf a year ago. Moreover, total liquids sales volume for the quarter was recorded at 4,148 thousand barrels (MBbls) versus the year-ago period's 2,555 MBbls.

Commodity Price Realizations

Average realized price was \$2.61 per thousand cubic feet of natural gas equivalent (Mcf), up from \$2.49 in the year-ago quarter. Natural gas price was recorded at \$2.84 per Mcf, up from the year-ago level of \$2.05. Moreover, oil price was recorded at \$61.98 per barrel, up from \$31.63 in first-quarter 2020. Moreover, ethane sales price was recorded at \$6.66 per barrel for the first quarter, higher than the year-ago level of \$4.05.

Expenses

Total operating expenses were \$1.31 per Mcfe for first-quarter 2021, down from \$1.33 in the prior-year period.

Processing expenses were 10 cents per Mcfe, up from the year-ago period's 8 cents. Gathering expenses were flat year over year at 68 cents per Mcfe. Lease operating expenses were also flat with the year-ago level of 7 cents. However, transmission costs decreased to 30 cents per Mcfe from the year-ago level of 38 cents.

Wells Drilled

The company drilled 17 net wells in the first quarter. While nine wells were drilled in WV Marcellus, eight were drilled at PA Marcellus.

Cash Flows

EQT Corp.'s adjusted operating cash flow was \$495.4 million for the quarter, down from \$512.6 million a year ago. However, free cash flow for the quarter rose to \$258.5 million from the year-ago level of \$250.5 million.

Capex & Balance Sheet

Total capital expenditure amounted to \$238.2 million for the first quarter, down from \$262.1 million a year ago.

As of Mar 31, 2021, the company had \$40.7 million in cash and cash equivalents, up sequentially from \$18.2 million. Total debt was reported at \$4,806 million, down from \$4,925.5 million at fourth quarter-end.

Guidance

For 2021, the largest natural gas producer of the United States expects total sales volumes in the band of 1,620-1,700 Bcfe. Moreover, the company projects 2021 total per unit operating costs within \$1.29-\$1.41 per Mcfe.

Adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization for 2021 are expected within \$1.85-\$1.95 billion. Capital expenditure for the year is expected in the range of \$1.025-\$1.125 billion. Importantly, free cash flow is now projected in the band of \$575-\$675 million, up from the previous guidance of \$500-\$600 million.

Valuation

EQT Corporation shares are up 76.3% in the year-to-date period and 52.7% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Oils-Energy sector are up 85.2% and 27.2% in the year-to-date period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and the sector are up 108.7% and 38.2%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is up 13.1% in the year-to-date period and 42.6% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 1.44X forward 12-month sales, which compares to 2.26X for the Zacks sub-industry, 0.89X for the Zacks sector and 4.70X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 6.26X and as low as 0.34X, with a 5-year median of 1.35X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$24.00 price target reflects 1.54X F12M sales.

The table below shows summary valuation data for EQT.

Valuation Multiples - EQT					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/S F12M	Current	1.44	2.26	0.89	4.7
	5-Year High	6.26	4.02	1.46	4.74
	5-Year Low	0.34	0.89	0.6	3.21
	5-Year Median	1.35	2.19	0.94	3.72
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	8.34	11.34	5.79	17.32
	5-Year High	83.3	16.88	10.56	17.74
	5-Year Low	3.05	2.91	3.1	9.63
	5-Year Median	10.7	8.92	5.77	13.46
P/B TTM	Current	0.68	2.13	1.33	7.02
	5-Year High	1.5	3.2	1.57	7.03
	5-Year Low	0.13	0.48	0.54	3.84
	5-Year Median	0.56	1.97	1.33	5.02

As of 06/09/2021

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 41% (102 out of 251)



Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Antero Resources Corporation (AR)	Neutral	3
Continental Resources, Inc. (CLR)	Neutral	3
ConocoPhillips (COP)	Neutral	3
Devon Energy Corporation (DVN)	Neutral	3
Murphy Oil Corporation (MUR)	Neutral	3
Occidental Petroleum Corporation (OXY)	Neutral	3
Range Resources Corporation (RRC)	Neutral	3
Southwestern Energy Company (SWN)	Neutral	3

The positions listed should not be deemed a recommendation to buy, hold or sell.

Industry Comparison Industry: Oil And Gas - Exploration And Production - United States				Industry Peers		
	EQT	X Industry	S&P 500	AR	CLR	COP
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	3	3	3
VGM Score	A	-	-	B	A	A
Market Cap	6.25 B	310.70 M	30.22 B	4.15 B	13.03 B	80.53 B
# of Analysts	13	5	12	4	9	7
Dividend Yield	0.00%	0.00%	1.29%	0.00%	1.24%	2.88%
Value Score	B	-	-	B	B	C
Cash/Price	0.01	0.05	0.06	0.00	0.01	0.11
EV/EBITDA	23.78	-2.22	17.40	-11.29	13.11	26.57
PEG F1	3.55	0.75	2.13	NA	NA	3.45
P/B	0.68	1.95	4.17	0.67	1.95	1.87
P/CF	4.07	4.70	17.80	5.32	8.88	13.47
P/E F1	35.55	11.23	21.56	11.79	16.88	17.23
P/S TTM	2.15	2.30	3.51	1.23	4.46	3.22
Earnings Yield	2.86%	8.53%	4.55%	8.44%	5.92%	5.80%
Debt/Equity	0.52	0.27	0.66	0.41	0.74	0.45
Cash Flow (\$/share)	5.50	0.89	6.83	2.58	3.99	4.43
Growth Score	A	-	-	A	A	B
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	25.36%	12.75%	9.44%	-4.95%	68.93%	147.06%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	435.63%	224.12%	21.30%	308.04%	279.58%	457.00%
Current Cash Flow Growth	-22.33%	-35.05%	0.98%	-21.63%	-48.98%	-54.72%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	8.53%	5.71%	7.28%	-1.96%	-2.21%	-9.67%
Current Ratio	0.75	0.73	1.39	0.48	0.86	2.03
Debt/Capital	34.10%	34.23%	41.53%	29.20%	42.60%	30.94%
Net Margin	-28.97%	-43.30%	11.95%	-27.96%	-5.19%	0.08%
Return on Equity	-0.06%	-0.27%	16.36%	1.16%	-1.80%	-1.85%
Sales/Assets	0.16	0.27	0.51	0.25	0.20	0.37
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	7.06%	30.22%	9.37%	16.81%	73.43%	102.36%
Momentum Score	C	-	-	F	C	A
Daily Price Change	-0.44%	0.00%	-0.44%	0.88%	-1.23%	-1.31%
1-Week Price Change	2.73%	3.54%	0.58%	1.01%	8.17%	7.37%
4-Week Price Change	7.33%	7.57%	2.80%	23.45%	16.91%	7.16%
12-Week Price Change	18.83%	8.47%	7.24%	34.05%	29.18%	5.01%
52-Week Price Change	47.66%	53.75%	36.87%	280.61%	104.73%	29.99%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	3,582,159	194,340	1,770,532	6,099,648	1,590,163	7,251,220
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	-0.12%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-0.05%	3.63%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	18.64%	1.76%	0.03%	0.00%	8.16%	4.08%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	18.83%	27.98%	3.39%	59.82%	82.04%	51.80%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	-50.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.76%	4.83%

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Zacks Stock Rating System

We offer two rating systems that take into account investors' holding horizons: Zacks Rank and Zacks Recommendation. Each provides valuable insights into the future profitability of the stock and can be used separately or in combination with each other depending on your investment style.

Zacks Recommendation

The Zacks Recommendation aims to predict performance over the next 6 to 12 months. The foundation for the quantitatively determined Zacks Recommendation is trends in the company's estimate revisions and earnings outlook. The Zacks Recommendation is broken down into 3 Levels; Outperform, Neutral and Underperform. Unlike many Wall Street firms, we maintain a balance between the number of Outperform and Neutral recommendations. Our team of 70 analysts are fully versed in the benefits of earnings estimate revisions and how that is harnessed through the Zacks quantitative rating system. But we have given our analysts the ability to override the Zacks Recommendation for the 1200 stocks that they follow. The reason for the analyst over-rides is that there are often factors such as valuation, industry conditions and management effectiveness that a trained investment professional can spot better than a quantitative model.

Zacks Rank

The Zacks Rank is our short-term rating system that is most effective over the one- to three-month holding horizon. The underlying driver for the quantitatively-determined Zacks Rank is the same as the Zacks Recommendation, and reflects trends in earnings estimate revisions.

Zacks Style Scores

The Zacks Style Score is as a complementary indicator to the Zacks rating system, giving investors a way to focus on the highest rated stocks that best fit their own stock picking preferences.

Academic research has proven that stocks with the best Value, Growth and Momentum characteristics outperform the market. The Zacks Style Scores rate stocks on each of these individual styles and assigns a rating of A, B, C, D and F. We also produce the VGM Score (V for Value, G for Growth and M for Momentum), which combines the weighted average of the individual Style Scores into one score. This is perfectly suited for those who want their stocks to have the best scores across the board.

Value Score	B
Growth Score	A
Momentum Score	C
VGM Score	A

As an investor, you want to buy stocks with the highest probability of success. That means buying stocks with a Zacks Recommendation of Outperform, which also has a Style Score of an A or a B.

Disclosures

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Returns quoted represent past performance which is no guarantee of future results. Investment returns and principal value will fluctuate so that when shares are redeemed, they may be worth more or less than their original cost. Current performance may be higher or lower than the performance shown.

Investing involves risk; principal loss is possible. There is no guarantee that companies that can issue dividends will declare, continue to pay or increase dividends.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

52-Week High-Low: The range of the highest and lowest prices at which a stock has traded during the past year. This range is determined based on the stock's daily closing price which may differ from the intra-day high or low. Many investors use it as a technical indicator to determine a stock's current value and future price movement. The idea here is that if price breaks out from the 52-week range, in either direction, the momentum may continue in the same direction.

20-Day Average Volume (Shares): The average number of shares of a company traded in a day over the last 20 days. It is a direct indication of a security's overall liquidity. The higher the average daily trading volume, the easier it is to enter or exit the stock at a desired price with more buyers and sellers being available.

Daily Price Change: This is the percentage difference between a trading day's closing price and the prior trading day's closing price. This item is updated at 9 p.m. EST each day.

1-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 5 trading days. This change reflects the collective buying and selling sentiment over the 1-week period.

A strong weekly price increase for the stock, especially when accompanied by increased volume, is an indication of it gaining momentum.

4-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 20 trading days or past 4 weeks. This is a medium-term price change metric and an indication of the stock gaining momentum.

12-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change of a stock's closing price over the last 60 trading days or past 12 weeks. Similar to 4-week price change, this is a medium-term price change metric. It shows whether a stock has been enjoying strong investor demand, or if it has been in consolidation, or distress over this period.

52-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 260 trading days or past 52 weeks. This long-term price change metric is a good reference point for investors. Some investors seek stocks with the best percentage price change over the last 52 weeks, expecting the momentum to continue.

Market Cap: The number of outstanding common shares of a company times its latest price per share. This figure represents a company's size, which indicates various characteristics, including price stability and risk, in which investors could be interested.

Year-To-Date Price Change: Change in a stock's daily closing price in the period of time beginning the first day of the current calendar year through to the previous trading day.

of Analysts: Number of EPS estimates used in calculating the current-quarter consensus. These estimates come from the brokerage analysts tracking this stock. However, the number of such analysts tracking this stock may not match the number of estimates, as all brokerage analysts may not come up with an estimate or provide it to us.

Beta: A measure of risk commonly used to compare the volatility of a stock to the overall market. The S&P 500 Index is the base for calculating beta and carries a value of 1. A stock with beta below 1 is less risky than the market as a whole. And a stock with beta above 1 is riskier.

Dividend: The portion of earnings a company is expected to distribute to its common shareholders in the next 12 months for each share they own. Dividends are usually paid quarterly. Dividend payments reflect positively on a company and help maintain investors' trust. Investors typically find dividend-paying stocks appealing because the dividend adds to any market price appreciation to result in higher return on investment (ROI). Moreover, a steady or increasing dividend payment provides investors a cushion in a down market.

Dividend Yield: The ratio of a company's annual dividend to its share price. The annual dividend used in the ratio is calculated based on the most recent dividend paid by the company. Dividend yield is an estimate of the dividend-only return from a stock in the next 12 months. Since dividend itself doesn't change frequently, dividend yield usually changes with a stock's price movement. As a result, often an unusually high dividend yield is a result of weak stock price.

S&P 500 Index: The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) Index is an unmanaged group of securities considered to be representative of the stock market in general. It is a market-capitalization-weighted index of stocks of the 500 largest U.S. companies. Each stock's weight in the index is proportionate to its market value.

Industry: One of the 250+ groups that Zacks classifies all stocks into based on the nature of business. These groups are termed as expanded (aka "X") industries and map to their respective (economic) sectors; Zacks has 16 sectors.

Zacks Industry Rank: The Zacks Industry Rank is determined by calculating the average Zacks Rank for all stocks in the industry and then assigning an ordinal rank to it. For example, an industry with an average Zacks Rank of 1.6 is better than an industry with an average Zacks Rank of 2.3. So, the industry with the better average Zacks Rank would get a better Zacks Industry Rank. If an industry has the best average Zacks Rank, it would be considered the top industry (1 out of 250+), which would place it at the top 1% of Zacks-ranked industries. Studies have shown that roughly half of a stock's price movement can be attributed to the industry group it belongs to. In fact, the top 50% of Zacks-ranked industries outperforms the bottom 50% by a factor of more than 2 to 1.

Last EPS Surprise: The percentage deviation of a company's last reported earnings per share from the Zacks Consensus Estimate. Companies with a positive earnings surprise are more likely to surprise again in the future (or miss again if they recently missed).

Last Sales Surprise: The percentage deviation of a company's last reported sales from the Zacks Consensus Estimate.

Expected Report Date: This is an estimated date of a company's next earnings release. The information originated or gathered by Zacks Investment Research from its information providers or publicly available sources is the basis of this estimate.

Earnings ESP: The Zacks Earnings ESP compares the Most Accurate Estimate to the Zacks Consensus Estimate for the yet-to-be reported quarter. The Most Accurate Estimate is the most recent version of the Zacks Consensus EPS Estimate. The idea here is that analysts revising their estimates closer to an earnings release have the latest information, which could potentially be more accurate than what they and others contributing to the consensus had predicted earlier. Thus, a positive or negative Earnings ESP reading theoretically indicates the likely deviation of the actual earnings from the consensus estimate. However, the model's predictive power is significant for positive ESP readings only. A positive Earnings ESP is a strong predictor of an earnings beat, particularly when combined with a Zacks Rank #1 (Strong Buy), #2 (Buy) or #3 (Hold). Our research shows that stocks with this combination produce a positive surprise nearly 70% of the time.

Periods:

TTM: Trailing 12 months. Using TTM figures is an effective way of analyzing the most-recent financial data in an annualized format that helps neutralize the effects of seasonality and other quarter-to-quarter variation.

F1: Current fiscal year. This period is used to analyze the estimates for the ongoing full fiscal year.

F2: Next fiscal year. This period is used to analyze the estimates for the next full fiscal year.

F12M: Forward 12 months. Using F12M figures is an effective way of analyzing the near-term (the following four unreported quarters) estimates in an annualized manner. Instead of typically representing estimates for the full fiscal year, which may not represent the nitty-gritty of each quarter, F12M figures suggest an all-inclusive annualized estimate for the following four quarters. The annualization helps neutralize the potential effects of seasonality and other quarter-to-quarter variations.

P/E Ratio: The price-to-earnings ratio measures a company's current market price per share relative to its earnings per share (EPS). Usually, the trailing-12-month (TTM) EPS, current-fiscal-year (F1) EPS estimate, or forward-12-month (F12M) EPS estimate is used as the denominator. In essence, this ratio shows what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of EPS. In other words, this ratio gives a sense of what the relative value of the company is at the already reported level of earnings or at a future level of earnings.

It is one of the most widely-used multiples for determining the value of a company and helps comparing its valuation with that of a competitor, the industry group or a benchmark.

PEG Ratio: The price/earnings to growth ratio is a stock's P/E ratio using current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by its expected EPS growth rate over the coming 3 to 5 years. This ratio essentially determines a stock's value by factoring in the company's expected earnings growth and is thus believed to provide a more complete picture than just the P/E ratio, particularly for faster-growing companies.

P/S Ratio: The price-to-sales ratio is calculated as a company's current price per share divided by trailing 12 months (TTM) sales or revenues per share. This ratio shows what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of TTM sales per share. The P/S ratio is at times the only valuation metric when the company has yet to become profitable.

Cash/Price Ratio: The cash-to-price ratio or Cash Yield is calculated as cash and marketable securities per share divided by the company's current share price. Like the earnings yield, which shows the anticipated yield (or return) on a stock from earnings for each dollar invested, the cash yield does the same, with cash being the source of return instead of earnings. For example, a cash/price ratio of 0.08 suggests a return of 8% or 8 cents for every \$1 investment.

EV/EBITDA Ratio: The EV/EBITDA ratio, also known as Enterprise Multiple, is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization). Usually, trailing-12-month (TTM) or forward-12-month (F12M) EBITDA is used as the denominator.

EV/Sales Ratio: The enterprise value-to-sales ratio is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by annual sales. It is an expansion of the P/S valuation, which uses market value instead of enterprise value. The EV/Sales ratio is perceived as more accurate than P/S, in part, because the market capitalization does not take a company's debt into account when valuing it.

EV/CF Ratio: The enterprise value-to-cash flow ratio is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by the trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow. It's a measure of how long it would take to buy the entire business if you were able to use all the company's operating cash flow.

The EV/CF ratio is perceived as more accurate than the P/CF ratio, in part, because the market price does not take a company's debt into account when valuing it.

EV/FCF Ratio: The enterprise value-to-free cash flow metric compares a company's enterprise value to its trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow (FCF). This metric is very similar to the EV/CF ratio, but is considered a more exact measure owing to the fact that it uses free cash flow, which subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding growth activities and payments to shareholders.

P/EBITDA Ratio: The P/EBITDA ratio is calculated as a company's per share market value divided by EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization). This metric is very similar to the EV/EBITDA ratio, but is considered a little less exact measure as it uses market price, which does not take a company's debt into account. However, since EBITDA is often considered a proxy for cash income, the metric is used as a measure of what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of the company's cash profitability in the trailing 12 months (TTM) or forward 12 months (F12M).

P/B Ratio: The price-to-book ratio is calculated as a company's current price per share divided by its book value (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks) per share. In short, the book value is how much a company is worth. In other words, it reflects the total value of a company's assets that its common shareholders would receive if it were to be liquidated. So, the P/B ratio indicates whether you're paying higher or lower than what would remain if the company went bankrupt immediately. Investors typically use this metric to determine how a company's stock price stacks up to its intrinsic value.

P/TB Ratio: The price-to-tangible-book value ratio is calculated as a the per share market value of a company divided by the value of its tangible assets (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks – intangible assets) per share. Tangible book value is the same thing as book value except it excludes the value of intangible assets to get a step closer to the baseline value of the company.

P/CF Ratio: The price-to-cash flow ratio measures a company's per share market price relative to its trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow per share. This metric is used to determine whether a company is undervalued or overvalued relative to another stock, industry or sector. And like the P/E ratio, a lower number is typically considered better from the value perspective.

One of the reasons why P/CF ratio is often preferred over P/E ratio is the fact that operating cash flow adds back non-cash expenses such as depreciation and amortization to net income. This feature helps valuing stocks that have positive cash flow but are not profitable because of large noncash charges.

P/FCF Ratio: The price-to-free cash flow ratio is an extension of P/CF ratio, which uses trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow per share instead of operating cash flow per share. This metric is considered a more exact measure than P/CF ratio, as free cash flow subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding activities that generate additional revenues.

Earnings Yield: The earnings yield is calculated as current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by the company's current share price. The ratio, which is the inverse of the P/E ratio, measures the anticipated yield (or return) from earnings for each dollar invested in a stock today.

For example, earnings yield for a stock, which is trading at \$35 and expected to earn \$3 per share in the current fiscal year (F1), would be 0.0857 ($3/35 = 0.0857$) or 8.57%. In other words, for \$1 invested in the stock today, the yield from earnings is anticipated to be 8.57 cents.

Investors most commonly compare the earnings yield of a stock to that of a broad market index (such as the S&P 500) and prevailing interest rates, such as the current 10-year Treasury yield. Since bonds and stocks compete for investors' dollars, stock investors typically demand a higher yield for the extra risk they assume compared to investors of U.S. Treasury-backed securities that offer virtually risk-free returns. This additional return is referred to as the risk premium.

Debt/Equity Ratio: The debt-to-equity ratio is calculated as a company's total liabilities divided by its shareholder equity. This metric is used to gauge a company's financial leverage. In other words, it is a measure of the degree to which a company is financing its operations through debt versus its own funds. The higher the ratio, the higher the risk for shareholders.

However, this ratio is difficult to compare across industry groups where ideal amounts of debt vary. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-equity ratio should be compared with other companies in the same industry.

Cash Flow (\$/share): Cash flow per share is calculated as operating cash flow (after-tax earnings + depreciation + other non-cash charges) divided by common shares outstanding. It is used by many investors as a measure of a company's financial strength. Since cash flow per share takes into consideration a company's ability to generate cash by adding back non-cash expenses, it is regarded by some as a more accurate measure of a company's financial situation than earnings per share, which could be artificially deflated.

Current Ratio: The current ratio or liquidity ratio is a company's current assets divided by its current liabilities. It measures a company's ability to pay short-term obligations. A current ratio that is in line with the industry average or slightly higher is generally considered acceptable. A current ratio that is lower than the industry average would indicate a higher risk of distress or default. A higher number is usually better. However, a very high current ratio compared to the industry average could be an indication of inefficient use of assets by management.

Debt/Capital Ratio: Debt-to-capital ratio is a company's total debt (interest-bearing debt + both short- and long-term liabilities) divided its total capital (interest-bearing debt + shareholders' equity). It is a measure of a company's financial leverage. All else being equal, the higher the debt-to-capital ratio, the riskier the stock.

However, this ratio can vary widely from industry to industry, the ideal amount of required debt being different. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-capital ratio should be compared with the same for its industry.

Net Margin: Net margin is calculated as net income divided by sales. It shows how much of each dollar in sales generated by a company translates into profit. For example, if a company's net margin is 15%, its net income is 15 cents for every \$1 of sales it makes.

A change in margin can reflect either a change in business conditions, or a company's cost controls, or both. If a company's expenses are growing faster than sales, its net margin will decline. However, different net margin rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare net margin rates of companies in the same industry group.

Return on Equity: Return on equity (ROE) is calculated as trailing-12-month net income divided by trailing-12-month average shareholder equity (including reinvested earnings). This metric is considered a measure of how effectively management is using a company's assets to generate profits. For example, if a company's ROE is 10%, it creates 10 cents profits for every \$1 shareholder equity, which is basically the company's assets minus debt. A company's ROE deemed good or bad depends on what's normal for its peers or industry group.

Sales/Assets Ratio: The sales-to-assets ratio or asset utilization ratio or asset turnover ratio is calculated as a company's annual sales divided by average assets (average of assets at the beginning of the year and at the year's end). This metric helps investors understand how effectively a company is using its assets to generate sales. For example, a sales-to-assets ratio of 2.5 indicates that the company generated \$2.50 in sales for every \$1 of assets on its books.

The higher the sales-to-assets ratio, the better the company is performing. However, similar to many other ratios, the asset turnover ratio tends to be higher for companies in certain industries/sectors than in others. So, a company's sales-to-assets ratio should be compared with the same for its industry/sector.

Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years): This is the average annual (trailing-12-month) EPS growth rate over the last 3-5 years. This metric helps investors see how a company's EPS has grown from a long-term perspective.

Note: There are many factors that can influence short-term numbers — a recession will reduce this number, while a recovery will inflate it. The longterm perspective helps smooth out short-term events.

Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0): This is the estimated EPS growth rate for the current financial year. It is calculated as the consensus estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported EPS for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Current Cash Flow Growth: It measures the latest year-over-year change in operating cash flow. Cash flow growth tells an investor how quickly a company is generating inflows of cash from operations. A positive change in the cash flow is desired and shows that more 'cash' is coming in than going out.

Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years): This is the annualized change in cash flow over the last 3-5 years. The change in a longer period helps put the current reading into proper perspective. By looking at the rate, rather than the actual dollar value, the comparison across the industry and peers becomes easier.

Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0): This metric looks at the estimated sales growth for the current year. It is calculated as sales estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported sales for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Like EPS growth, a higher rate is better for sales growth. A look at a company's projected sales growth instantly tells you what the outlook is for their products and services. However, different sales growth rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare sales growth rates of companies in the same industry group.

EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past week. The change in a company's consensus EPS estimate (or earnings estimate revision) has proven to be strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares. It is an integral part of the Zacks Rank.

If a stock's consensus EPS estimate is \$1.10 now versus \$1.00 a week ago, that will be reflected as a 10% upward revision. If, on the other hand, it went from \$1.00 to 90 cents, that would be a 10% downward revision.

EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past four weeks.

A stock's earnings estimate revision in a 1-week period is important. But it's more meaningful to look at the longer-term revision. And, of course, the 4-week change helps put the 1-week change into proper perspective.

EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past 12 weeks.

This metric essentially shows how the consensus EPS estimate has changed over a period longer than 1 week or 4 weeks.

EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal quarter over the past four weeks.

While the revision in consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year is strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares, the estimate revision for the current fiscal quarter is an important metric as well, especially over the short term, and particularly as a stock approaches its earnings date. If a stock's Q1 EPS estimate decreases ahead of its earnings release, it's usually a negative sign, whereas an increase is a positive sign.