

Gentex Corporation(GNTX)

\$36.03 (As of 01/13/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$38.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 12/28/20)

Prior Recommendation: Outperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

2-Buy

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:C

Value: D

Growth: C

Momentum: A

Summary

Gentex aims at generating long-term growth driven by product launches, improved product mix and unique technology platforms. Amid the gradual recovery of production and sales of vehicles, Gentex upwardly revised the guidance for 2H'20. The firm's full display mirrors (FDM) is a key growth engine. Gentex's Integrated Tool Module and HomeLink have significant growth opportunities, going forward. Also, Gentex's low leverage increases its financial flexibility to tap onto growth opportunities. The company is likely to bear the brunt of declining demand of its products, which is likely to impact its earnings. Also, rising operational costs are denting the profit levels of the firm. Increasing competition along with tariff costs are other causes of concern. As such, the stock warrants a cautious stance right now.

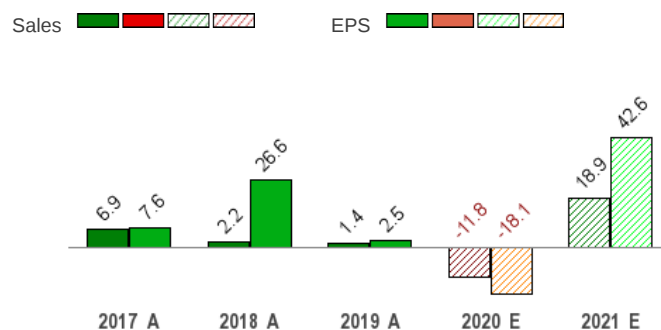
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$37.75 - \$19.48
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	1,547,638
Market Cap	\$8.8 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	6.2%
Beta	1.15
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.48 / 1.3%
Industry	Automotive - Original Equipment
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 27% (69 out of 253)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	17.1%
Last Sales Surprise	2.9%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	1.0%
Expected Report Date	01/29/2021
Earnings ESP	2.0%

P/E TTM	28.8
P/E F1	18.6
PEG F1	3.7
P/S TTM	5.5

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	489 E	482 E	494 E	505 E	1,949 E
2020	454 A	230 A	475 A	481 E	1,639 E
2019	469 A	469 A	478 A	444 A	1,859 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	\$0.49 E	\$0.49 E	\$0.51 E	\$0.53 E	\$1.94 E
2020	\$0.36 A	\$0.02 A	\$0.48 A	\$0.50 E	\$1.36 E
2019	\$0.40 A	\$0.42 A	\$0.44 A	\$0.39 A	\$1.66 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and Sales estimates, is as of 01/13/2021. The reports text is as of 01/14/2021.

Overview

Zeeland, MI-based Gentex Corporation is engaged in supplying automatic-dimming rear-view mirrors and electronics to the automotive industry; fire protection products to the fire protection market; and dimmable aircraft windows for aviation markets.

In 2019, automotive net sales came in at \$1.81 billion and other net sales totaled \$48.4 million.

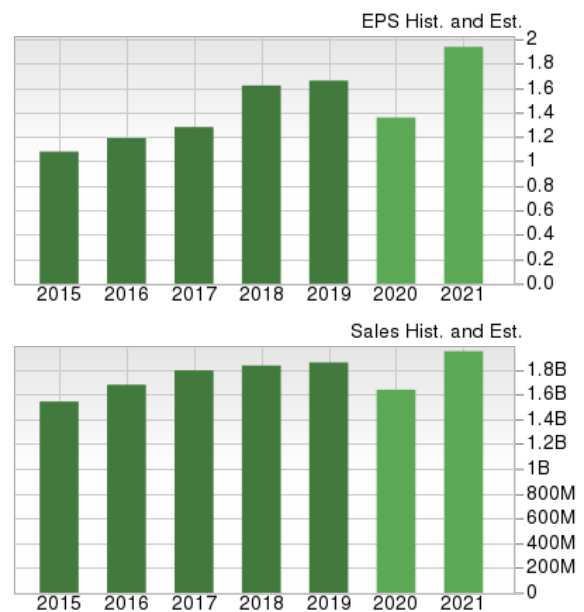
Gentex Corporation currently has the following reportable segments: Automotive Products which includes Automotive Rear-view Mirrors and Electronics and HomeLink Modules; and other segments which includes Dimmable Aircraft Windows and Fire Protection Products.

Automotive Rear-view Mirrors and Electronics: The company manufactures interior electrochromic automatic-dimming rear-view mirrors that darken to reduce glare and improve visibility for the driver. These electronic interior mirrors can also include additional electronic features such as compass, microphones, lighting assist and driver assist forward safety camera systems, and a wide variety of displays.

HomeLink Modules: The company manufactures and sells HomeLink Modules individually, as well as in combination with the automotive mirrors and other advanced features, as described above. For the majority of automotive products, transfer of control and revenue recognition occurs when the company ships the product from the manufacturing facility to the customer.

Dimmable Aircraft Windows: The company supplies variable dimmable windows for the passenger compartment on the Boeing 787 Dreamliner Series of Aircraft. For dimmable aircraft windows, transfer of control and revenue recognition occurs when the company ships the product from the manufacturing facility to the customer.

Fire Protection Products: The company manufactures photoelectric smoke detectors and alarms, visual signaling alarms, electrochemical carbon monoxide detectors and alarms, audible and visual signaling alarms, and bells and speakers for use in fire detection systems in office buildings, hotels, and other commercial and residential buildings.



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

▲ Gentex aims at generating long-term growth driven by product launches, improved product mix and unique technology platforms. The company remains steadfast in its efforts to provide unique and value-added solutions to customers that provide scalable platforms focused on the consumer and engineered specifically to meet each original equipment manufacturer's (OEM's) requirements for the next several years. Its revenues have witnessed a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.8% during the 2017-2019 time frame. The firm forecasts 15-20% year over year growth in sales in 2021.

Strong product launches, unique technology platforms and aggressive capital-deployment strategy aid Gentex.

▲ The FDM is a key growth engine and is likely to maintain top-line growth trajectory. FDM has grown rapidly and is launching a range of vehicles in 2020. The key to growth and maintenance of its market share is innovation and penetration. Notably, penetration of auto-dimming interior mirrors has risen from 25% in 2014 to 31.3% in 2018, while auto-dimming exterior mirror penetration has increased from 7% to 12.6% in the same period. Gentex products are not restricted to gas powered vehicles. The company is well positioned to cater to the emerging autonomous vehicle and connected vehicle space. Beyond mirrors, Gentex's Integrated Tool Module and HomeLink have significant growth opportunities, going forward. The firm's growth avenues in tech products diversify and enhance prospects. Penetration for HomeLink is likely to grow, as the demand for connectivity to homes increases. Gentex's HomeLink Connect app enables users to control their existing home automation devices.

▲ The firm's dividend per share has grown since 2015. While most of the companies are suspending dividends to conserve cash amid the pandemic-led financial crisis, Gentex remains committed to preserve shareholder value and has declared dividends. Gentex's low leverage of around 0.01 compared with the industry's 0.47 increases its financial flexibility to tap onto growth opportunities.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ IHS Markit expects total light vehicle production (LVP) to witness a year over year decline of 2% in the fourth quarter of 2020. Amid lower year over year LVP across major key markets served, the car rearview mirror maker is likely to bear the brunt of declining demand of its products, which is likely to impact its earnings when compared to the corresponding quarter of 2019.
- ▼ The company is bogged down by operational inefficiencies since the past several quarters. Rising selling, general and administration (SG&A) and research and development (R&D) costs are denting the profit levels of the firm. The trend is expected to continue amid new product launches, which remains a headwind. Notably, operating expenses for the first nine months of 2020 rose around 2% year over year to \$151.6 million. As it is the company has revised its forecast for operating expenses in the second half of 2020 to \$95-\$100 million, higher than the prior guidance of \$88-\$93 million. This is likely to affect the firm's cash flows and margins.
- ▼ Increasing competition along with tariff costs are other causes of concern. Tariff costs are weighing on Gentex's margins. In fact, if not for the incremental tariffs encountered in 2019, the gross margin would have been slightly better than 2018. While the company is exploring its options on diversifying its sourcing away from China but there is no quick fix in sight. Tariffs in China still remain a concern, in turn, escalating cost of raw materials, which are likely to hurt the company's margins in 2020 as well.

Amid the forecast of lower total light-vehicle production, Gentex's bottom line are likely to get impacted in the near term.

Last Earnings Report

Gentex's Q3 Earnings Beats Estimates, 2H20 View Up

Gentex reported third-quarter diluted earnings of 48 cents per share, surpassing the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 41 cents.

Markedly, higher-than-expected revenues from the Automotive Products segment resulted in this outperformance. Revenues from the segment came in at \$464.7 million, beating the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$438 million. Moreover, the bottom line comes in higher than the year-ago quarter's profit of 44 cents per share, marking a rise of 9% year on year.

This Zeeland-based automotive products supplier reported net sales of \$474.6 million, outpacing the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$461 million. The top-line figure, however, comes in 1% lower than the year-ago quarter's \$477.8 million. Nonetheless, the third quarter of 2020 marked the second highest sales quarter in company history behind only the third quarter of 2019.

The company recorded gross margin of 39.7% in the reported quarter, higher than the year-ago quarter's 37.7%. Gross margin also improved significantly on a quarter-over-quarter basis, on solid orders during the September-end quarter and the previously-announced \$35 million in annualized structural cost reductions that occurred last quarter. Gross margin also improved on the efforts made in reducing purchasing costs and improvements in tariff-related costs. This partially offset the adverse impact caused by annual customer price reductions.

Segmental Performance

The Automotive segment's net sales, which have the highest contribution to Gentex's revenues, totaled \$464.7 million in the third quarter, marginally up from the prior-year quarter's \$464.3 million. Automotive net sales were robust during the reported quarter even though it witnessed a 3% quarter-over-quarter fall in auto-dimming mirror unit shipments. This was chiefly owing to the revenue growth of the company's Full-Display Mirror products.

Other net sales, which include dimmable aircraft windows and fire protection products, dropped 26% from the year-ago quarter to \$10 million. Dimmable aircraft window sales plummeted 52% year over year during the July-September period. Gentex expects that dimmable aircraft window sales will continue being impacted until the recovery of the aerospace industry begins and the Boeing 787 aircraft production levels buoy.

In the third quarter, auto-dimming mirror shipments in the North America market climbed 2% from the prior-year quarter to 3.6 million units. In the International market, the same fell 5% from the prior-year quarter to 6.9 million units. Total shipments declined 3% year over year to 10.5 million units, as global light vehicle production dwindled 4% in the third quarter on the coronavirus crisis that caused massive shutdowns in the automotive industry.

Costs, Financials, Dividend & Cash Position

Total operating expenses decreased 5% year over year to \$49.4 million in third-quarter 2020. This decrease primarily resulted from the structural cost reductions made during the second quarter of 2020.

SG&A expenses dropped to \$21.6 million from the year-ago quarter's \$22.8 million. Engineering and R&D expenses slid to \$27.8 million in the third quarter from the \$29.4 million recorded in the year-ago period.

During the September-end quarter, Gentex repurchased 1.2 million shares of its common stock at an average price of \$26.93 per share. As of Sep 30, 2020, the company had 11.9 million shares remaining available for repurchase pursuant to its previously-announced share-repurchase plan.

During the July-September quarter, Gentex repaid \$50 million of debt on the company's revolving credit facility. The company currently anticipates repaying the remaining balance on its credit facility during the fourth quarter.

Also, Gentex continues to pay dividends of 12 cents per share. Notably, the company had cash and cash equivalents of \$400.5 million as of Sep 30, 2020.

Forecasts

Based on the mid-October 2020 IHS Markit forecast, light vehicle production in Gentex's primary markets is expected to be down 2% year over year in the fourth quarter. For calendar-year 2020, light vehicle production in the company's primary markets is expected to be down 16% when compared to calendar-year 2019.

Gentex has updated the previously-issued guidance for the second half of 2020. The company now envisions net sales in the band of \$940-\$960 million, higher than the prior forecast of \$865-\$915 million. Gross margin is now anticipated in the range of 39-40%, up from the previous guided range of 36-37%. Capital expenditure and operating expenses are estimated within \$25-\$30 million and \$95-\$100 million, respectively.

The company also issued revenue guidance for 2021. The metric is projected to be 15-20% higher than estimated revenues in calendar-year 2020.

Quarter Ending	09/2020
Report Date	Oct 23, 2020
Sales Surprise	2.91%
EPS Surprise	17.07%
Quarterly EPS	0.48
Annual EPS (TTM)	1.25

Valuation

Gentex's shares are up 38.8% and 17% over the past six months and in the trailing 12-month period, respectively. Stocks in the Zacks Automotive - Original Equipment industry and the Zacks Auto-Tires-Trucks sector are up 28.1% and 73.6%, respectively, over the past six months. Over the past year, the Zacks sub industry and sector are up 19.2% and 107.6%, respectively. The S&P 500 index is up 18.5% and 17.4% over the past 6 months and in the past year, respectively.

The stock is currently trading at 18.68X forward 12-month earnings, which compares to 21.27X for the Zacks sub-industry, 27.57X for the Zacks sector and 23.12X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 19.48X and as low as 10.36X, with a 5-year median of 14.06X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform on line with the market. Our \$38 price target reflects 19.68X forward 12-month earnings per share.

The table below shows summary valuation data for GNTX:

Valuation Multiples - GNTX					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	18.68	21.27	27.57	23.12
	5-Year High	19.48	25.72	27.65	23.79
	5-Year Low	10.36	8.39	8.22	15.3
	5-Year Median	14.06	11.42	10.22	17.83
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	18.31	10.92	21.45	17.23
	5-Year High	19.12	10.92	21.45	17.37
	5-Year Low	6.58	3.76	6.87	9.55
	5-Year Median	9.14	6.41	9.34	13.22
P/S F12M	Current	4.53	1.02	1.42	4.52
	5-Year High	4.73	1.02	1.42	4.52
	5-Year Low	2.27	0.41	0.47	3.2
	5-Year Median	3.12	0.61	0.6	3.68

As of 01/13/2021

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 27% (69 out of 253)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
China Yuchai International Limited (CYD)	Outperform	2
BRP Inc. (DOOO)	Outperform	1
Halfords Group Plc (HLFDY)	Neutral	3
LCI Industries (LCII)	Neutral	2
Modine Manufacturing Company (MOD)	Neutral	3
Gentherm Inc (THRM)	Neutral	3
Veoneer, Inc. (VNE)	Neutral	3
Wabash National Corporation (WNC)	Neutral	4

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Automotive - Original Equipment				Industry Peers		
	GNTX	X Industry	S&P 500	DOOO	HLFDY	MOD
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Outperform	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	2	-	-	1	3	3
VGM Score	C	-	-	B	A	A
Market Cap	8.83 B	1.94 B	27.19 B	5.65 B	764.11 M	705.33 M
# of Analysts	6	3	13	4	1	2
Dividend Yield	1.33%	0.00%	1.41%	0.54%	0.00%	0.00%
Value Score	D	-	-	C	A	A
Cash/Price	0.05	0.11	0.06	0.17	0.20	0.09
EV/EBITDA	13.84	7.71	14.93	10.39	NA	9.23
PEG F1	3.71	1.12	2.63	NA	NA	1.59
P/B	4.66	2.33	3.78	NA	1.45	1.35
P/CF	17.22	9.10	14.43	12.69	3.63	5.38
P/E F1	18.57	16.62	20.64	16.29	10.66	15.85
P/S TTM	5.51	0.71	2.99	1.31	NA	0.40
Earnings Yield	5.38%	5.60%	4.73%	6.13%	9.38%	6.31%
Debt/Equity	0.00	0.24	0.70	-5.57	0.75	0.72
Cash Flow (\$/share)	2.09	2.23	6.93	5.07	2.11	2.56
Growth Score	C	-	-	B	A	A
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	7.24%	-5.34%	9.72%	17.62%	NA	10.88%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	42.58%	58.92%	12.36%	36.98%	22.03%	-17.14%
Current Cash Flow Growth	-1.98%	-10.10%	5.22%	19.75%	90.03%	-17.34%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	7.66%	3.82%	8.37%	NA	NA	9.73%
Current Ratio	4.12	1.61	1.38	1.47	0.81	1.57
Debt/Capital	0.00%	28.15%	41.97%	NA	42.94%	41.72%
Net Margin	18.96%	-1.29%	10.44%	3.78%	NA	-0.31%
Return on Equity	16.59%	-0.12%	15.37%	-67.06%	NA	9.48%
Sales/Assets	0.74	1.02	0.50	1.37	NA	1.15
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	18.93%	18.64%	6.02%	-1.40%	4.52%	0.00%
Momentum Score	A	-	-	D	F	A
Daily Price Change	-4.02%	-0.28%	-0.30%	-2.81%	0.00%	-0.93%
1-Week Price Change	6.63%	4.51%	2.23%	1.76%	0.00%	7.17%
4-Week Price Change	7.91%	8.25%	3.84%	-3.53%	11.56%	10.59%
12-Week Price Change	28.31%	35.05%	14.40%	12.18%	26.65%	93.68%
52-Week Price Change	17.02%	45.86%	7.38%	38.24%	78.49%	85.85%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	1,547,638	317,273	1,726,400	33,374	55	348,478
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	1.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	1.04%	0.00%	0.07%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	13.39%	10.43%	2.55%	32.49%	0.00%	234.62%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	3.16%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	NA	NA

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	D
Growth Score	C
Momentum Score	A
VGM Score	C

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 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.