



Farmers & Merchants Bancorp (FMCB)

Updated October 17th, 2024 by Aristofanis Papadatos

Key Metrics

Current Price:	\$967	5 Year CAGR Estimate:	15.3%	Market Cap:	\$677 M
Fair Value Price:	\$1,464	5 Year Growth Estimate:	5.0%	Ex-Dividend Date:	12/3/2024 ¹
% Fair Value:	66%	5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:	8.6%	Dividend Payment Date:	12/31/2024
Dividend Yield:	1.8%	5 Year Price Target	\$1,868	Years Of Dividend Growth:	59
Dividend Risk Score:	A	Retirement Suitability Score:	B	Rating:	Buy

Overview & Current Events

Founded in 1916, Farmers & Merchants Bancorp is a locally owned and operated community bank with 32 locations in California. Due to its small market cap (\$677 million) and its low liquidity, it passes under the radar of most investors. Nevertheless, F&M Bank has paid uninterrupted dividends for 89 consecutive years and has raised its dividend for 59 consecutive years. As a result, it is a Dividend King.

The company is conservatively managed and, until eight years ago, had not made an acquisition since 1985. However, in the last eight years, it has begun to pursue growth more aggressively. It acquired Delta National Bancorp in 2016 and increased its locations by 4. Moreover, in late 2018, it acquired Bank of Rio Vista, which has helped F&M Bank to further expand in the San Francisco East Bay Area.

In mid-October, F&M Bank reported (10/17/24) financial results for the third quarter of fiscal 2024. The bank grew its adjusted earnings-per-share 2.5% over the prior year's quarter, from \$29.23 to \$29.96. It posted 4% growth of loans and flat deposits. Net interest income dipped -3% due to a contraction of net interest margin from 4.17% to 4.07% amid higher deposit costs. Management remains optimistic for the foreseeable future, as the bank enjoys one of the widest net interest margins in its sector. We reiterate that F&M Bank is one of the most resilient banks during downturns, such as the pandemic, a potential recession or the financial turmoil caused by the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, Credit Suisse and First Republic. Given the positive business performance of F&M Bank, we still expect record earnings-per-share of \$122.00 this year.

Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029
EPS	\$32.64	\$34.82	\$37.44	\$35.03	\$56.82	\$71.18	\$74.03	\$84.03	\$96.55	\$116.61	\$122.0	\$155.71
DPS	\$12.70	\$12.90	\$13.10	\$13.55	\$13.70	\$14.20	\$14.75	\$15.30	\$16.15	\$17.10	\$17.60	\$22.50
Shares²	778.4	786.6	794.0	809.8	801.2	787.0	793.6	789.2	767.9	747.5	735.0	700.0

In 2018, F&M Bank enjoyed a nice tailwind from its reduced tax rate and posted impressive earnings growth. In 2019, the bank posted impressive growth again, mostly thanks to its takeover of Bank of Rio Vista. However, the bank cannot keep growing at this pace. Before 2018, F&M Bank grew its earnings-per-share at a 10-year average annual rate of 2.2%. The Fed has just begun reducing interest rates and thus it will probably help F&M Bank expand its net interest margin thanks to lower deposit costs. We expect 5.0% annual earnings-per-share growth over the next five years. A contributor to growth will be the relatively new branch in Oakland, which opened in the fourth quarter of 2021.

Valuation Analysis

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Now	2029
Avg. P/E	14.6	15.8	17.3	16.9	12.2	10.8	9.9	10.2	9.8	8.3	7.9	12.0
Avg. Yld.	2.9%	2.5%	2.3%	2.2%	2.0%	1.9%	2.0%	1.8%	1.7%	1.8%	1.8%	1.2%

¹ Estimated date for semiannual dividend.

² In thousands.

Disclosure: This analyst has no position in the security discussed in this research report, and no plans to initiate one in the next 72 hours.



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F&M Bank is trading at a price-to-earnings ratio of 7.9, which is much lower than the 10-year average price-to-earnings ratio of 12.6 of the stock. We assume a fair earnings multiple of 12.0 for this small-cap stock. If the stock reaches our fair value estimate over the next five years, it will enjoy an 8.6% annualized valuation tailwind.

Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029
Payout	39.7%	37.5%	35.3%	33.2%	24.1%	19.9%	19.9%	18.2%	16.7%	14.7%	14.4%	14.5%

F&M Bank is a prudently managed bank, which has always targeted a conservative capital ratio. The bank currently has a total capital ratio of 14.95%, which results in the highest regulatory classification of “well capitalized.” Moreover, its credit quality remains exceptionally strong, as there are extremely few non-performing loans and leases in its portfolio. The conservative management results in lower leverage and thus slower growth than leveraged banks during boom times but protects the company from recessions, such as the fierce recession that resulted from the pandemic.

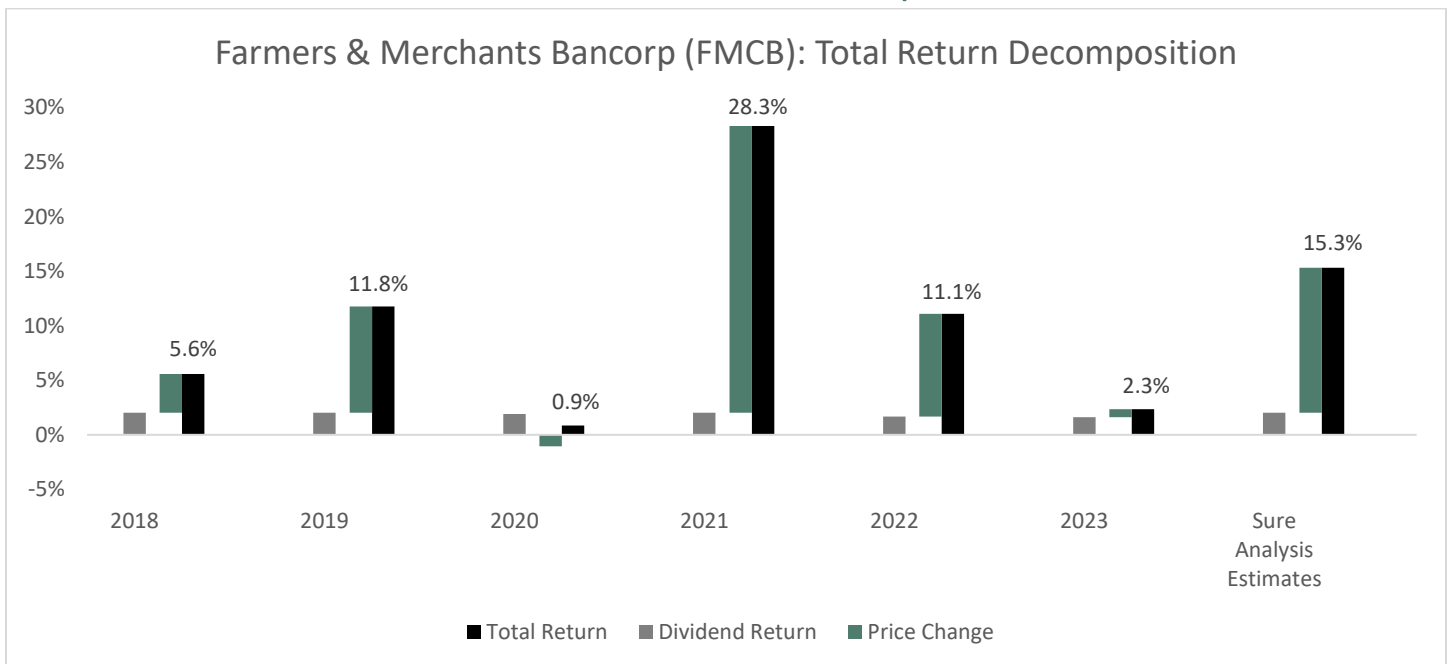
The merits of this strategy were on display during the Great Recession. While most banks saw their earnings collapse, F&M Bank incurred a modest -9% decrease in its earnings-per-share, from \$28.69 in 2008 to \$25.57 in 2009, and kept raising its dividend. That was certainly outstanding performance in the struggling financial sector.

The prudent management of the company is also confirmed by its exceptional dividend growth record. The banks that operate with high leverage cannot achieve such long dividend growth streaks because a recession always shows up after a few years and punishes those that are exposed. On the other hand, F&M Bank has grown its dividend by only 3.4% per year on average during the last decade. This is a slow growth rate, particularly given the lackluster 1.8% dividend yield.

Final Thoughts & Recommendation

F&M Bank is a conservatively managed small-cap bank, which is resilient to the impact of nearly 23-year high interest rates on net interest margin. We expect the stock to offer a 15.3% average annual return over the next five years thanks to 5.0% growth of earnings-per-share, a 1.8% dividend and an 8.6% valuation tailwind. The stock maintains its buy rating, though investors should always keep in mind the risks of stocks with such a small market cap and low trading liquidity.

Total Return Breakdown by Year



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Income Statement Metrics

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Revenue	91	100	112	123	140	155	163	179	199	227
SG&A Exp.	38	42	44	48	52	57	58	66	67	76
D&A Exp.	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2
Net Profit	25	27	30	28	46	56	59	66	75	88
Net Margin	27.9%	27.3%	26.4%	23.1%	32.6%	36.1%	36.0%	37.0%	37.8%	38.8%
Free Cash Flow	22	35	33	36	53	65	50	58	98	88
Income Tax	15	17	16	26	14	19	19	22	25	28

Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Assets	2361	2615	2922	3075	3434	3722	4550	5178	5327	5309
Cash & Equivalents	77	59	99	187	146	295	384	715	588	411
Accounts Receivable	96	88	100	99	126	129	130	18	22	29
Total Liabilities	2127	2364	2642	2776	3123	3353	4127	4715	4842	4759
Accounts Payable	53	76	50	42	50	64	56	---	73	81
Long-Term Debt	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Shareholder's Equity	233	252	280	300	311	369	424	463	485	550
D/E Ratio	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02

Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Return on Assets	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	0.9%	1.4%	1.6%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.7%
Return on Equity	11.5%	11.3%	11.2%	9.8%	14.9%	16.5%	14.8%	15.0%	15.8%	17.1%
ROIC	11.0%	10.8%	10.8%	9.5%	14.4%	16.0%	14.4%	14.6%	15.5%	16.7%
Shares Out.	778.4	786.6	794.0	809.8	801.2	787.0	793.6	789.2	777.7	757.3
Revenue/Share	116.79	127.45	141.61	151.80	174.27	197.06	205.56	227.16	256.25	300.16
FCF/Share	28.45	43.99	41.95	44.07	66.39	82.98	63.54	73.32	125.47	116.69

Note: All figures in millions of U.S. Dollars unless per share or indicated otherwise.

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