



# IRONVINE

CAPITAL PARTNERS, LLC

## Investors & Friends of Ironvine-

Beginning this quarter, we are consolidating two letters into a single, unified communication. For just shy of five years, we have managed two distinct portfolios that were reported on by means of separate letters. Many of you were receiving both and may have noted a growing similarity between the two. In the spirit of efficiency, we've elected to combine our quarterly communications to provide readers with a lens into firm-wide investment activity. Each of us conducts research for and contributes to the management of both strategies, so writing with one voice is consistent with how we approach our daily work. Going forward, our letters will continue to furnish information pertinent to investors in both the Core and Concentrated strategies—discussions about process, individual businesses, and portfolio composition, along with performance and the key underlying drivers for each strategy. In short, there will be no changes to the level of account-specific information you receive during our quarterly reporting cadence.

As a brief reminder, Ironvine's Concentrated Equity strategy, which commenced operations when we founded the partnership in 2012, invests in 15-20 businesses typically ranging in size from 5-15% of the portfolio with the top five holdings generally representing 40-50% of assets. Core Equity, which we introduced at the beginning of 2016, holds investments in approximately 30 businesses which generally range in size from 3-6% with the ten largest of those representing approximately 40-50% of assets. Despite these structural differences, the philosophy underpinning the two vehicles is identical, lending itself well to this letter's new format.

Ironvine's research process is conducted with a common goal: finding exceptional businesses with productive growth opportunities run by gifted management teams who think and act like owners. We have identified well over one hundred businesses possessing such criteria and it's our intent to become intimately familiar with every one of them over time. For example, we completed formal due diligence on two more companies this quarter, deepening our knowledge of the software industry, and we continue to make progress on several other research initiatives. This growing library of outstanding franchises thus forms the menu of new investment candidates competing for a place in our portfolios. We have written at length about the means by which we unearth and analyze these "stones" throughout each of our strategies' histories<sup>1</sup> and will continue to highlight our process at work in real-time as we make new investments on your behalf.

A natural result of this shared vision—what makes a business durable and a management team talented—is significant overlap between the two strategies. At the time of this writing, 18 of the 20 investments held in our Concentrated portfolio were represented in our more diversified 30-stock Core strategy. We expect similarly few exceptions going forward. In cases where we illustrate businesses that aren't held in both vehicles, we pledge to be judicious in discussing characteristics that make them attractive to us generally such that the content remains relevant and informative to readers.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ironvinecapital.com/selected-commentary/>

On a look through basis, the companies underlying both Ironvine strategies are poised for another solid year of earnings growth. Time has shown that durable increases in earnings power are the clearest measure of underlying value creation, and we believe much of the progress we've seen over the past 18 months is lasting. In many cases, growth that was strong before the pandemic has actually accelerated over the course of 2021. Government stimulus, high levels of ongoing investment, low borrowing costs, and the ongoing digitization of global industry have each provided tailwinds. Businesses that were forced to close or curtail in-person services like Disney and Starbucks are also on the mend. The broad and relatively rapid snap back in growth has put considerable pressure on the supply of labor, raw materials, and freight. The majority of our companies have managed through these challenges well thus far. In fact, the additional obstacles have served to accentuate the often-underappreciated supply chain strength and operational rigor of companies like Thermo Fisher Scientific, Dollar General, and Costco.

One business that has struggled to navigate the pronounced disruption to global freight is discount retailer Dollar Tree (ticker: DLTR). Dollar Tree operates roughly 7,900 of its namesake stores across the U.S. and Canada, as well as 7,900 stores under the Family Dollar brand (which it acquired for approximately \$9 billion in 2015). Dollar stores offer customers a unique combination of value and convenience. They typically price goods 20-30% below pharmacies and convenience stores and offer a more efficient stop than trips to mass retailers like Walmart or Target.

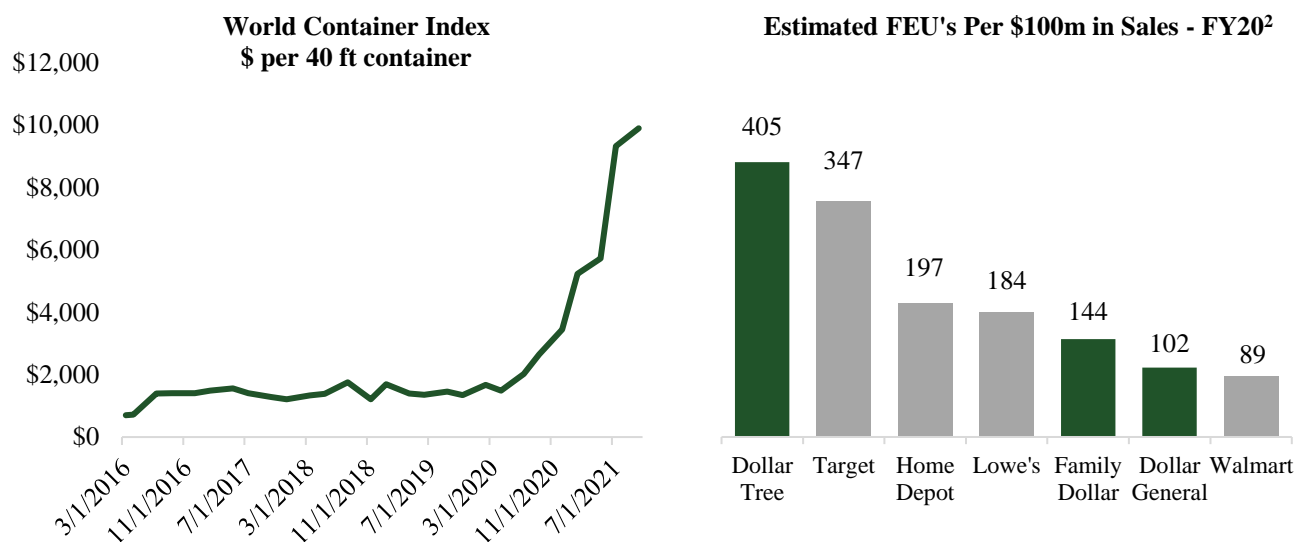
The Dollar Tree banner is unique among dollar stores in that it has historically held fast to the \$1.00 price point. In order to do so, the company began building and scaling a team of merchants across Asia in the mid-1980s to source products directly from manufacturers. Most U.S. companies purchased through wholesalers at the time, enduring multiple layers of product mark-ups. Dollar Tree's Asian team successfully sourced a wide array of goods that provided surprising value for a dollar and earned the company margins high enough to stomach the investment in freight and associated logistics. This organically built procurement organization thus birthed a novel, low-priced "treasure hunt" experience for shoppers that has driven a multi-decade stream of attractive growth, consistent margins, and store-level returns on capital north of 50%.

Three distinct challenges have weighed on Dollar Tree in recent years, however, effectively putting a lid on earnings growth. First, Dollar Tree overestimated its retailing acumen in purchasing AND operating Family Dollar. As a multi-price point retailer with heavier exposure to grocery and consumables, Family Dollar was—and is—a different animal than the more discretionary-focused Dollar Tree. Prior leadership was slow to fully appreciate the differences, slow to integrate key functions, and underinvested in the Family Dollar store base for two to three years. Meanwhile, competitor (and fellow Ironvine holding) Dollar General moved aggressively to expand its footprint, invest in its supply chain, and improve its product assortment. As a result, Family Dollar sales and margins suffered during fiscal 2019 and 2020, leading to a belated but necessary chain-wide store renovation initiative.

Second, trading tensions between the U.S. and China erupted during 2018 and 2019, resulting in a series of increasing tariffs on Chinese imports. While the company was ultimately successful navigating these cost increases, they consumed valuable management bandwidth and forced the Dollar Tree banner to absorb higher product costs for well over a year.

Finally, as the World Container Index shown on the following page demonstrates, ocean freight costs have exploded over the course of the last 12 months. By nature of its import-heavy business, the Dollar Tree banner ships more ocean containers per \$100 million in revenue than any other U.S. retailer (and roughly four times as many as Dollar General, as the bar chart below right highlights). All told, a combination of pandemic-related port disruptions and gradually healing demand have driven the cost of shipping a

container of dry goods from Asia to the U.S. up by 600-700% versus pre-pandemic levels. A 40-foot equivalent unit that previously cost \$1,500 to move from Shanghai to the Port of Los Angeles has hovered between \$11,000 and \$12,000 since mid-August. Dollar Tree’s exposure to these spot market rates has temporarily increased as its contracted carriers have been unable to meet prior volume commitments. When combined with higher domestic trucking costs, freight alone is expected to reduce Dollar Tree’s earnings by 20-25% this fiscal year.



Despite these challenges, we are optimistic about Dollar Tree’s intermediate and long-term prospects and recently purchased shares of the company in the \$90s across both strategies. The Family Dollar rejuvenation program is roughly three quarters of the way complete with signs of continued progress. The onset of COVID-19 made the past 18 months a difficult period in which to assess “normal,” but it presented Family Dollar with the opportunity to serve new (and likely some former) customers with an improved shopping experience. Family Dollar’s new “Combo” store format, which is a larger jointly branded Family Dollar-Dollar Tree unit, was also born over the course of the past year and should enable Family Dollar to better address rural markets where it has struggled to gain traction standalone (and head-to-head against Dollar General).

Following numerous multi-price point experiments over the years, newly appointed CEO Mike Witynski committed to introducing \$3 and \$5 goods in at least 5,000 Dollar Tree stores under an initiative called Dollar Tree *Plus* (DT+). The decision to “break the buck” at Dollar Tree is truly significant—culturally and financially. Since the company’s transition in 1986 from a toy-focused retailer to a traditional dollar store, cofounder Macon Brock had held tightly to the simplicity and power of the single price point. In his 2017 memoir *One Buck at a Time*, Brock attributed the company’s exceptional 30-year run of success to its steadfast commitment to pricing everything in the store at one dollar. “Personally, I viewed the dollar price point as sacred...Ditch the dollar, I believed, and we’d surrender our niche...our negotiating position...the element of surprise we had with our customers...On top of that, I was confident that the merchandise we’d sell at \$1.29, or two bucks, or even three, would not be appreciably better than what we were already offering for one.” Witynski is taking the brand in a new direction—one that we believe, if executed well, will better serve customers and shareholders over time.

<sup>2</sup> Sources: (1) Other Retailers: Forty-foot-equivalent units (FEU's) per Journal of Commerce Top 100 Importers - May 28, 2021; TEU's were converted to FEU's; Sales per public filings. (2) Dollar Tree/Family Dollar - Internal records and public filings

Early results from the initial 340 DT+ stores are promising and give us confidence Dollar Tree *Plus* can attract new customers and drive an increase in basket size. In addition to this important pivot, management announced in late September that Dollar Tree would begin exploring a broader assortment of price points across the store. This is potentially an even more significant step for the Dollar Tree brand, creating greater merchandise flexibility and providing an outlet in the event inflationary pressures prove structural. Canadian peer Dollarama, which began a decade-long transition away from the \$1.00-only price point in 2008, provides interesting potential precedent for Dollar Tree. Dollarama increased its average ticket by 4-6% annually for a decade and expanded its operating margin from ~13% (similar to Dollar Tree's average during FY19-20) to north of 22%. To be clear, Dollar Tree has not yet committed to a nationwide rollout of non-\$1.00 price points, nor have we seen how its core customer will respond to slightly higher price points. But we are encouraged by Witynski's appetite for change and the prospect of what a re-energized shopping experience will produce for Dollar Tree longer-term.

Finally, we believe the majority of the sharp increase in freight costs will prove to be transitory in time. Anecdotes from shippers, other retailers, and those regularly surveying U.S. ports suggest it could take another 12-18 months for container backlogs to clear. When they do, we would expect Dollar Tree's shipping costs to normalize, unwinding the earnings headwinds the company is presently experiencing. In the meantime, the company is buying back healthy amounts of stock at favorable prices and recently increased its share repurchase authorization to \$2.5 billion (which represents >10% of the company's present market capitalization).

With greater clarity on the company's strategic direction, Family Dollar's repositioning nearing completion, newfound optionality in the Dollar Tree banner, a de-levered balance sheet, and the business producing meaningful excess cash, we believe the upside opportunity in Dollar Tree far exceeds the risk of permanent loss of capital. If the Dollar Tree team executes the DT+ rollout well over the next several years and finds modest success offering multiple price points to the core Dollar Tree customer, the opportunity for long-term compounding is compelling from the mid-\$90s. In short, Dollar Tree is a good business with productive growth opportunities selling at a discounted price.

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We have included additional information on each of our strategies as an addendum to this letter on the following pages.

Thank you for your continued support.

The Ironvine Investment Team

November 4, 2021



	YTD 09/30/21	1 Year	Annualized Returns as of 09/30/21		Cumulative	
			3 Year	5 Year	Inception 04/01/12	Inception 04/01/12
Ironvine Concentrated (net)	21.27%	36.29%	19.91%	18.76%	14.03%	248.19%
S&P 500	15.92%	30.00%	15.99%	16.90%	14.77%	270.05%

### Concentrated Equity Highlights

- Returned 2.0% net of fees in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021
- Invested in long-time Core Equity holding Dollar Tree
- Added to stakes in Thermo Fisher Scientific and CoStar Group
- Sourced capital primarily from investments in JPMorgan Chase and Berkshire Hathaway

Top 10 Holdings as of 9/30/2021
MICROSOFT CORP.
LIBERTY BROADBAND CORP.
ALPHABET INC.
META PLATFORMS INC. (FKA FACEBOOK)
JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.
S&P GLOBAL INC.
MOODY'S CORP.
VISA INC
BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY INC.
THERMO FISHER SCIENTIFIC INC.

Company	Average Weight	Portfolio Contribution
<b>Top Contributors -12 months ended 9/30/2021</b>		
JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.	8.3%	6.4%
ALPHABET INC.	8.4%	5.6%
MICROSOFT CORP.	12.0%	4.0%
BOSTON OMAHA CORP.	3.1%	3.1%
BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY INC.	7.3%	2.6%
<b>Top Detractors -12 months ended 9/30/2021</b>		
DOLLAR TREE INC.	1.2%	0.0%



	YTD 09/30/21	Annualized Returns as of 09/30/21			Inception 01/01/16	Cumulative Inception 01/01/16
		1 Year	3 Year	5 Year		
Ironvine Core (net)	15.57%	28.53%	21.74%	19.34%	18.77%	168.93%
S&P 500	15.92%	30.00%	15.99%	16.90%	16.05%	135.37%

### Core Equity Highlights

- Returned 2.1% net of fees in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021
- Overall portfolio activity was light with trailing 12-month turnover measuring ~5%; while our investment philosophy and general bias toward inactivity is likely to result in low turnover, we anticipate an average of between 10-20% over time (implying 5-10 year holding periods)
- Core Equity’s Durability Ranking remained roughly unchanged vs. a quarter ago at 2.0, which is consistent with its composition over the past two years and attractive in absolute terms
- Following a 12% increase in portfolio-wide per share earnings during 2020, we anticipate weighted average underlying growth approaching 20% this year

Top 10 Holdings as of 9/30/2021
MICROSOFT CORP.
CATALENT INC.
THERMO FISHER SCIENTIFIC INC.
ALPHABET INC.
DANAHER CORP.
LOWE'S COMPANIES INC
LIBERTY BROADBAND CORP.
S&P GLOBAL INC.
MOODY'S CORP.
HEICO CORP. CL A

Company	Average Weight	Portfolio Contribution
<b>Top Contributors -12 months ended 9/30/2021</b>		
ALPHABET INC.	3.3%	2.4%
CATALENT INC.	4.9%	2.3%
MICROSOFT CORP.	5.7%	1.8%
LAB. CORP. OF AMERICA	3.6%	1.8%
BANK OF AMERICA CORP.	2.2%	1.4%
<b>Top Detractors -12 months ended 9/30/2021</b>		
BLACK KNIGHT, INC.	2.2%	-0.5%
CLARIVATE, PLC	1.0%	-0.1%



## Important Disclaimers

Reported performance figures represent an average, or composite, of our progress. Individual returns will vary based on the timing of your investment with us, fee differentials, or other account-specific circumstances. Client reporting, including positioning and performance, is sent under separate cover.

Past performance is not a guarantee or a reliable indicator of future results. All investments contain risk and may lose value. This material contains the current opinions of the authors such opinions are subject to change without notice. This material is distributed for informational purposes only. Forecasts, estimates, and certain information contained herein are based upon proprietary research and should not be considered as investment advice or a recommendation of any particular security, strategy or investment product. Information contained herein has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable, but not guaranteed. Holdings mentioned, including the Ironvine Core Equity Top Ten Holdings, are subject to change and are not recommendations to buy or sell any security.

Ironvine Capital Partners, LLC (Ironvine) is an independent registered investment adviser registered with the United States Securities and Exchange Commission. The firm definition includes all assets that are managed by Ironvine.

**The Ironvine Concentrated Equity Composite** includes all accounts over which Ironvine deems to have discretion and that follow the composite strategy. Ironvine Concentrated Equity seeks to earn above average returns by investing primarily in a concentrated portfolio of global issuers in all facets of capital structures, including and not limited to common and preferred stocks, debt instruments, convertibles etc.

The Ironvine Concentrated Equity Composite was created on December 1, 2013, with an inception date of April 1, 2012. The strategy does not seek to directly track or compare itself to any particular equity benchmark, but the composite is compared against the total return of the S&P 500. The benchmark includes 500 stocks representing all major industries of the economy. Ironvine Concentrated Equity employs a total return strategy and the S&P 500 is provided as it is the most widely recognized alternative to any actively managed mandate amongst global investors. Past performance is not indicative of future results. All results are calculated in US Dollars and include reinvestment of dividends and other earnings.

Performance presented prior December 1, 2013 occurred while the Portfolio Management Team was affiliated with a prior firm and the Portfolio Management Team members were the only individual(s) responsible for selecting the securities to buy and sell. A review of the performance record for compliance with the portability requirements of the GIPS standards was completed by an independent accounting firm. The verification and performance examination report are available upon request.

Prior to October 2017 the composite was named "The Ironvine Composite."

**The Ironvine Core Equity Composite** includes all accounts over which Ironvine deems to have discretion and that follow the composite strategy. Ironvine Core Equity seeks to earn above average long-term returns by investing primarily in portfolio of common equity securities with a particular focus on companies that have the ability to generate high and sustainable returns on invested capital.

The Ironvine Core Equity Composite was created on 12/29/2017, with an inception date of January 1, 2016. The strategy does not seek to directly track or compare itself to any particular equity benchmark, but the composite is compared against the total return of the S&P 500. The benchmark includes 500 stocks representing all major industries of the economy. Ironvine Core Equity employs a total return strategy and the S&P 500 is provided as it is the most widely recognized alternative to any actively managed mandate amongst global investors. Past performance is not indicative of future results. All results are calculated in US Dollars and include reinvestment of dividends and other earnings.

Performance presented prior January 1, 2017 occurred while the Portfolio Manager, Richard L. Jarvis, was affiliated with a prior firm. Mr. Jarvis was the only individual responsible for selecting the securities to buy and sell at the predecessor firm and was a primary decision maker in that capacity at Ironvine until his retirement on 12/31/20. This performance record was incorporated into the Ironvine Core Equity Composite in compliance with the portability requirements of the GIPS standards. A copy of the Portability report is available upon request.

Ironvine Capital Partners ("Ironvine") claims compliance with the Global Investment Performance Standards (GIPS®) and has prepared and presented this report in compliance with the GIPS® standards. Ironvine has been independently verified for the periods 12/1/13– 12/31/20. A firm that claims compliance with the GIPS® standards must establish policies and procedures for complying with all the applicable requirements of the GIPS® standards. Verification provides assurance on whether the firm's policies and procedures related to composite and pooled fund maintenance, as well as the calculation, presentation, and distribution of performance, have been designed in compliance with the GIPS® standards and have been implemented on a firm-wide basis. The Ironvine Concentrated Equity Composite has had a performance examination for the periods 12/1/13– 12/31/20. The Ironvine Core Equity Composite has had a performance examination for the periods 1/1/17– 12/31/20. The verification and performance examination reports are available upon request.

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Results are based on fully discretionary accounts under management, including those accounts no longer with the firm. To be included in the composite an account must have a minimum value of \$25,000 at the beginning of a month. The U.S. Dollar is the currency used to express performance. Policies for valuing portfolios, calculating performance, and preparing compliant presentations are available upon request. Returns are presented net of management fees and commissions and include the reinvestment of all income. Net of fee and commission performance was calculated using actual management fees and commissions. The investment management fee schedule for the composite is tiered, at 1.0% for relationships less than \$10 million, 0.90% for relationships between \$10 million - \$25 million, 0.80% for relationships between \$25 million - \$50 million, 0.70% for relationships between \$50 million - \$100 million, and 0.60% for relationships above \$100 million (each tier indicated as an annual percentage charged quarterly). Actual investment advisory fees incurred by clients may vary. The collection of fees produces a compounding effect on the total return net of fees. For example, a portfolio that earned 8% annually for ten years would result in a cumulative return of 115.9% before investment management fees and 96.7% net of such fees, assuming a 1.00% fee per year. The annual dispersion calculation shown above reflects the asset weighted standard deviation of returns around the asset weighted mean return.

The firm's list of composite descriptions is available upon request. Effective 1/1/2017 Ironvine merged with Saddle Road Partners, LLC (Saddle Road). The surviving entity is Ironvine Capital Partners, LLC.

For more information about any of the above contact Ryan Mendlik at 402.715.5224 or [rmendlik@ironvinecapital.com](mailto:rmendlik@ironvinecapital.com). No part of this article may be reproduced in any form, or referred to in any other publication, without express written permission.