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Western Asset Mortgage Capital Corp
Form 10-K
March 29, 2018

UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20549
FORM 10-K

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934
For the fiscal year ended December 31, 2017

OR
 TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT
OF 1934

For the transition period from _____ to _____
Commission File Number: 001-35543

WESTERN ASSET MORTGAGE CAPITAL CORPORATION

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Delaware 27-0298092

(State or other jurisdiction of (I.R.S. Employer
incorporation or organization) Identification No.)

Western Asset Mortgage Capital Corporation

385 East Colorado Boulevard

Pasadena, California 91101

(Address of principal executive offices)

(626) 844-9400

(Registrant's telephone number, including area code)

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act:

Title of Each Class	Name of Each Exchange on Which Registered
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Common Stock, \$0.01 par value	New York Stock Exchange
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Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act: None

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act. Yes No

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Exchange Act. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically and posted on its corporate Web site, if any, every Interactive Data File required to be submitted and posted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§ 232.405 of this chapter) during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit and post such files). Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, a smaller reporting company or an emerging growth company. See the definitions of "large accelerated filer," "accelerated filer," "smaller reporting company," and "emerging growth company" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act (check one).

Large accelerated filer Accelerated filer Non-accelerated filer Smaller reporting company Emerging growth company

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Non-accelerated filer
(Do not check if a smaller reporting company) Smaller reporting company

Emerging growth company

If an emerging growth company, indicate by check mark if the registrant has elected not to use the extended transition period for complying with any new or revised financial accounting standards provided pursuant to Section 13(a) of the Exchange Act.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act). Yes No

The aggregate market value of the registrant's common stock held by non-affiliates was \$416,414,035 based on the closing sales price on the New York Stock Exchange on June 30, 2017.

On March 28, 2018, the registrant had a total of 41,679,679 shares of common stock outstanding.

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FORWARD-LOOKING INFORMATION

The Company makes forward-looking statements herein and will make forward-looking statements in future filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "SEC"), press releases or other written or oral communications within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "Securities Act"), and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the "Exchange Act"). For these statements, the Company claims the protections of the safe harbor for forward-looking statements contained in such sections. Forward-looking statements are subject to substantial risks and uncertainties, many of which are difficult to predict and are generally beyond the Company's control. These forward-looking statements include information about possible or assumed future results of the Company's business, financial condition, liquidity, results of operations, plans and objectives. When the Company uses the words "believe," "expect," "anticipate," "estimate," "plan," "continue," "intend," "should," "may" or similar expressions, the Company intends to identify forward-looking statements. Statements regarding the following subjects, among others, may be forward-looking: market trends in the Company's industry, interest rates, real estate values, the debt securities markets, the U.S. housing and the U.S. and foreign commercial real estate markets or the general economy or the market for residential and/or commercial mortgage loans; the Company's business and investment strategy; the Company's projected operating results; actions and initiatives of the U.S. Government and changes to U.S. Government policies and the execution and impact of these actions, initiatives and policies; the state of the U.S. and to a lesser extent, international economy generally or in specific geographic regions; economic trends and economic recoveries; the Company's ability to obtain and maintain financing arrangements, including under the Company's repurchase agreements, a form of secured financing, and securitizations; the current potential return dynamics available in residential mortgage-backed securities ("RMBS"), and commercial mortgage-backed securities ("CMBS" and collectively with RMBS, "MBS"); the level of government involvement in the U.S. mortgage market; the anticipated default rates on Non-Agency MBS (as defined herein), Residential and Commercial Whole-Loans and Residential Bridge Loans; the loss severity on Non-Agency MBS; the return of the Non-Agency RMBS, Non-Agency CMBS and asset-backed securities ("ABS") securitization markets; the general volatility of the securities markets in which the Company participates; changes in the value of the Company's assets; the Company's expected portfolio of assets; the Company's expected investment and underwriting process; interest rate mismatches between the Company's target assets and any borrowings used to fund such assets; changes in interest rates and the market value of the Company's target assets; changes in prepayment rates on the Company's target assets; effects of hedging instruments on the Company's target assets; rates of default or decreased recovery rates on the Company's target assets; the degree to which the Company's hedging strategies may or may not protect the Company from interest rate volatility; the impact of and changes in governmental regulations, tax law and rates, accounting guidance and similar matters; the Company's ability to maintain the Company's qualification as a real estate investment trust for U.S. federal income tax purposes; the Company's ability to maintain its exemption from registration under the Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended (the "1940 Act"); the availability of opportunities to acquire Agency RMBS, Non-Agency RMBS, CMBS, Residential and Commercial Whole-Loans, Residential and Commercial Bridge Loans and other mortgage assets; the availability of qualified personnel; estimates relating to the Company's ability to make distributions to its stockholders in the future; and the Company's understanding of its competition.

The forward-looking statements are based on the Company's beliefs, assumptions and expectations of its future performance, taking into account all information currently available to it. Forward-looking statements are not predictions of future events. These beliefs, assumptions and expectations can change as a result of many possible events or factors, not all of which are known to the Company. Some of these factors, are described in "Risk Factors" and "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" of this annual report on Form 10-K. These and other risks, uncertainties and factors, including those described in the annual, quarterly and current reports that the Company files with the SEC, could cause its actual results to differ materially from those included in any forward-looking statements the Company makes. All forward-looking statements speak only as of the date they are made. New risks and uncertainties arise over time and it is not possible to predict those events or how they may affect the Company. Except as required by law, the Company is not obligated to, and does not intend to, update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.

Part I

Item 1. Business

Our Company

Western Asset Mortgage Capital Corporation, a Delaware corporation, and Subsidiary (the “Company” unless otherwise indicated or except where the context otherwise requires “we”, “us” or “our”) commenced operations in May 2012, focused on investing in, financing and managing a diversified portfolio of real estate related securities, whole-loans and other financial assets, which we collectively refer to as our target assets. We are externally managed by Western Asset Management (our “Manager”) pursuant to the terms of a management agreement. We conduct our operations to qualify and be taxed as a real estate investment trust, or REIT, for U.S. federal income tax purposes. Accordingly, we generally will not be subject to U.S. federal income taxes on our taxable income that we distribute currently to our stockholders as long as we maintain our intended qualification as a REIT. However, certain activities that we may perform may cause us to earn income which will not be qualifying income for REIT purposes. We have designated our subsidiary as taxable REIT subsidiary, or TRS, to engage in such activities. We also intend to operate our business in a manner that permits us to maintain our exemption from registration under the 1940 Act, as amended, or the Investment Company Act. Our common stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange, or the NYSE, under the symbol “WMC”.

Our objective is to provide attractive risk adjusted returns to our shareholders primarily through an attractive dividend, we intend to support with sustainable core earnings, as well as the potential for higher returns through capital appreciation. Our investment strategy is based on our Manager's perspective of which mix of our target assets it believes provides us with the best risk-reward opportunities at any given time. We also deploy leverage as part of our investment strategy to increase potential returns. We primarily finance our investments through short-term repurchase agreements.

Our Manager

We are externally managed and advised by our Manager, an SEC-registered investment advisor and a wholly-owned subsidiary of Legg Mason, Inc., headquartered in Pasadena, California, that specializes in fixed-income asset management. From offices in Pasadena, Dubai, Hong Kong, London, Melbourne, New York, São Paulo, Singapore and Tokyo, our Manager's 862 employees provide investment services for a wide variety of global clients, including mutual funds, corporate, public, insurance, health care, union organizations and charitable foundations. In addition, two of our directors, James W. Hirschmann III and Jennifer W. Murphy, are also employees of our Manager. Our Manager is responsible for, among other duties: (i) performing all of our day-to-day functions; (ii) determining investment criteria in conjunction with our Board of Directors; (iii) sourcing, analyzing and executing investments, asset sales and financings; (iv) performing asset management duties; and (v) performing financial and accounting management.

Our Competitive Advantages

Our competitive advantages in the marketplace stems from our relationship with our Manager. As of December 31, 2017, our Manager had approximately \$442.2 billion in assets under management. Our Manager's scale makes it an important trading partner for many of the largest broker-dealers and banks, which provides our investment team the ability to source real estate related opportunities directly from originators as well as access attractive financing.

Our Investment Strategy

Our Manager’s investment philosophy, which developed from a singular focus in fixed-income asset management over a variety of credit cycles and conditions, is to provide clients with a diversified, long-term value-oriented portfolio. We benefit from the breadth and depth of our Manager’s overall investment philosophy, which focuses on a macroeconomic analysis as well as an in-depth analysis of individual assets and their relative value. In making investment decisions on our behalf, our Manager seeks to identify assets across the broad mortgage universe with attractive risk adjusted returns, which incorporates its view on the outlook for the mortgage markets, including relative

valuation, supply and demand trends, the level of interest rates, the shape of the yield curve, prepayment rates, financing and liquidity, commercial and residential real estate prices, delinquencies, default rates, recovery of various segments of the economy and vintage of collateral, subject to maintaining our REIT qualification and our exemption from registration under the 1940 Act.

Our target assets are comprised of Agency CMBS, Agency RMBS (including TBAs), Non-Agency CMBS, Non-Agency RMBS, Residential and Commercial Whole-Loans, Residential Bridge Loans, Commercial Mezzanine Loans, CMO's, GSE Risk Sharing Securities, Non U.S. CMBS and ABS, each of which is described below.

Our Target Assets

Agency CMBS. — Fixed and floating rate CMBS, for which the principal and interest payments are guaranteed by a U.S. Government agency or U.S. Government-sponsored entity, but for which the underlying mortgage loans are secured by real property other than single family residences. These may include, but are not limited to Fannie Mae DUS (Delegated Underwriting and Servicing) MBS, Freddie Mac Multifamily Mortgage Participation Certificates, Ginnie Mae project loan pools, and/or CMOs structured from such collateral.

Agency RMBS. — Agency RMBS, which are RMBS for which the principal and interest payments are guaranteed by a U.S. Government agency, such as the Government National Mortgage Association (“GNMA” or “Ginnie Mae”), or a U.S. Government-sponsored entity (“GSE”), such as the Federal National Mortgage Association (“FNMA” or “Fannie Mae”) or the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (“FHLMC” or “Freddie Mac”). The Agency RMBS we acquire can be secured by fixed-rate mortgages, adjustable-rate mortgages or hybrid adjustable-rate mortgages. Fixed-rate mortgages have interest rates that are fixed for the term of the loan and do not adjust. The interest rates on adjustable-rate mortgages generally adjust annually (although some may adjust more frequently) to an increment over a specified interest rate index. Hybrid adjustable-rate mortgages have interest rates that are fixed for a specified period of time (typically three, five, seven or ten years) and, thereafter, adjust to an increment over a specified interest rate index. Adjustable-rate mortgages and hybrid adjustable-rate mortgages generally have periodic and lifetime constraints on the amount by which the loan interest rate can change on any predetermined interest rate reset date.

Non-Agency RMBS. — RMBS that are not guaranteed by a U.S. Government agency or U.S. Government-sponsored entity, with an emphasis on securities that when originally issued were rated in the highest rating category by one or more of the nationally recognized statistical rating organizations. The mortgage loan collateral for Non-Agency RMBS consists of residential mortgage loans that do not generally conform to underwriting guidelines issued by a U.S. Government agency or U.S. Government-sponsored entity due to certain factors, including mortgage balances in excess of Agency underwriting guidelines, borrower characteristics, loan characteristics and/or level of documentation, and therefore are not issued or guaranteed by a U.S. Government agency or U.S. Government-sponsored entity. The mortgage loan collateral may be classified as subprime, Alternative-A or prime depending on the borrower’s credit rating and the underlying level of documentation. Non-Agency RMBS collateral may also include reperforming loans, which are conventional mortgage loans that were current at the time of the securitization, but had been delinquent in the past. Non-Agency RMBS may be secured by fixed-rate mortgages, adjustable-rate mortgages or hybrid adjustable-rate mortgages.

Non-Agency CMBS. — Fixed and floating rate CMBS for which the principal and interest payments are not guaranteed by a U.S. Government agency or U.S. Government-sponsored entity. We do not have an established minimum current rating requirement for such investments.

Non U.S. CMBS. — CMBS which is not guaranteed by a U.S. Government agency or U.S. Government-sponsored entity and which is secured by commercial real estate located outside of the U.S. Although our Manager believes that these investments can provide attractive risk-reward opportunities and offer additional asset diversification, investing in international real estate has a number of additional risks, including but not limited to currency risk, political risk and the legal risk of investing in jurisdictions with varying laws and regulations and potential tax implications.

GSE Risk Sharing Securities Issued by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. — From time to time we have and may in the future continue to invest in risk sharing securities issued by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Principal and interest payments on these securities are based on the performance of a specified pool of Agency residential mortgages. The payments due on these securities, however, are not secured by the referenced mortgages, the payments due are full faith and credit obligations of Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac respectively, but neither agency guarantees full payment of the underlying mortgages. Investments in these securities generally are not qualifying assets for purposes of the 75% real estate asset test applicable to REITs and generally do not generate qualifying income for purposes of the 75% real estate income test applicable to REITs. As a result, we may be limited in our ability to invest in such assets.

TBAs. — We may utilize TBAs, in order to invest in Agency RMBS. Pursuant to these TBAs, we agree to purchase (or deliver), for future settlement, Agency RMBS with certain principal and interest terms and certain underlying collateral, but the particular Agency RMBS to be delivered is not identified until shortly before the TBA settlement date. Our ability to invest in Agency RMBS through TBAs may be limited by the 75% real estate income and asset tests applicable to REITs.

Mortgage pass-through certificates. — Mortgage pass-through certificates are securities representing interests in “pools” of mortgage loans secured by residential real property where payments of both interest and scheduled principal, plus pre-paid principal, on the underlying loan pools are made monthly to holders of the securities, in effect “passing through” monthly payments made by the individual borrowers on the mortgage loans that underlie the securities, net of fees paid to the issuer/guarantor of the securities and servicers of the underlying mortgages.

Interest-Only Strips or IOs. — This type of security entitles the holder only to payments of interest based on a notional principal balance. The yield to maturity of Interest-Only Strips is extremely sensitive to the rate of principal payments (particularly prepayments) on the underlying pool of mortgages. We invest in these types of securities primarily to take advantage of particularly attractive prepayment-related or structural opportunities in the MBS markets, as well as to help manage the duration of our overall portfolio.

Inverse Interest-Only Strips or IIOs. — This type of security has a coupon with an inverse relationship to its index and is subject to caps and floors. Inverse Interest-Only MBS entitles the holder to interest only payments based on a notional principal balance, which is typically equal to a fixed rate of interest on the notional principal balance less a floating rate of interest on the notional principal balance that adjusts according to an index subject to set minimum and maximum rates. The current yield of Inverse Interest-Only MBS will generally decrease when its related index rate increases and increase when its related index rate decreases.

Agency and Non-Agency CMBS IO and IIO Securities. — Interest-Only and Inverse Interest-Only securities for which the underlying collateral is commercial mortgages the principal and interest on which may or may not be guaranteed by a U.S. Government agency or U.S. Government-sponsored entity. Unlike single family residential mortgages in which the borrower, generally, can prepay at any time, commercial mortgages frequently limit the ability of the borrower to prepay, thereby providing a certain level of prepayment protection. Common restrictions include yield maintenance and prepayment penalties, the proceeds of which are generally at least partially allocable to these securities, as well as, defeasance.

Principal-Only Strips or POs. — This type of security generally only entitles the holder to receive cash flows that are derived from principal repayments of an underlying loan pool, but in the case of Non-Agency Principal-Only Strips will also include cash flows from default recoveries and excess interest. The yield to maturity of Principal-Only Strips is extremely sensitive to the rate of principal payments (particularly prepayments) on the underlying pool of mortgages. We invest in these types of securities primarily to take advantage of structural opportunities in the MBS markets.

Residential Whole-Loans. — Residential Whole-Loans are mortgages secured by single family residences held directly by us or through structured Non-Agency RMBS programs crafted specifically for us and other clients of our Manager. To date our Residential Whole-Loans have been mostly adjustable rate loans that do not qualify for the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau’s (or CFPB) safe harbor provision for “qualifying mortgages”. However, our Manager’s review, relating to possible purchases of loans, includes an analysis of the loan originator’s procedures and documentation for compliance with Ability to Repay requirements. These loans are held in consolidated trusts with us holding the beneficial interest in the trusts. We may in the future securitize the whole-loan interests, selling more senior interests in the pool of loans and retaining residual portions. The characteristics of our Residential Whole-Loans may vary going forward.

Residential Bridge Loans. — Residential Bridge Loans are mortgages secured by non owner occupied single family and multi-family residences, typically short-term, held directly by us or through structured Non-Agency RMBS programs crafted specifically for us and other clients of our Manager. These loans are held in a consolidated trust with us

holding the beneficial interest in the trust.

Commercial Whole-Loans. — Our Manager is also actively exploring opportunities to invest in small balance, \$2.5 million to \$25.0 million, Commercial Whole-Loans, including commercial mortgages and Small Business Administration or SBA loans secured primarily by real estate. While our Manager has experience in CMBS and we currently invest in Agency and Non-Agency CMBS, as well as, Non U.S. CMBS, investing in Whole-Loans backed or secured by commercial real estate assets involves complex investment, structural, regulatory and accounting issues. Some of these issues are unique to Commercial Whole-Loans as opposed to residential mortgages. Accordingly, there is no assurance of the prevalence such investments will have in our overall portfolio in the future.

Commercial Mezzanine Loans. — Commercial mezzanine loans are generally structured to represent a senior position in the borrower's equity in, and subordinate to a first mortgage loan, on a property. These loans are generally secured by pledges of ownership interests, in whole or in part, in entities that directly or indirectly own the real property. At times, mezzanine loans may be secured by additional collateral, including letters of credit, personal guarantees, or collateral unrelated to the property.

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Mezzanine loans may be structured to carry either fixed or floating interest rates as well as carry a right to participate in a percentage of gross revenues and a percentage of the increase in the fair market value of the property securing the loan. Mezzanine loans may also contain prepayment lockouts, penalties, minimum profit hurdles and other mechanisms to protect and enhance returns to the lender. Mezzanine loans usually have maturities that match the maturity of the related mortgage loan but may have shorter or longer terms.

Collateralized Mortgage Obligations or CMOs. — These are securities, which can be Agency or Non-Agency, that are structured from residential and/or commercial pass-through certificates, which receive monthly payments of principal and interest. CMOs divide the cash flows which come from the underlying mortgage pass-through certificates into different classes of securities that may have different maturities and different weighted average lives than the underlying pass-through certificates.

ABS. — Debt and/or equity tranches of securitizations backed by various asset classes including, but not limited to, aircrafts, automobiles, credit cards, equipment, franchises, recreational vehicles and student loans. Investments in ABS generally are not qualifying assets for purposes of the 75% real estate asset test applicable to REITs and generally do not generate qualifying income for purposes of the 75% real estate income test applicable to REITs. As a result, we may be limited in our ability to invest in such assets.

Other investments. — In addition to MBS, our principal investment, and ABS from time to time, we may also make other investments in securities, which our Manager believes will assist us in meeting our investment objective and are consistent with our overall investment policies. These investments will normally be limited by the REIT requirements that 75% our assets be real estate assets and that 75% of our income be generated from real estate, thereby limiting our ability to invest in such assets.

Our Investment Portfolio

Our investment portfolio composition at December 31, 2017.

Our Financing Strategy

We deploy leverage to increase potential returns to our stockholders and to fund the acquisition of our target assets. While we are not required to maintain any particular leverage ratio, we expect to maintain a debt-to-equity ratio of three to ten times the amount of our stockholders' equity. To the extent the Agency MBS percentage of our portfolio decreases, our overall leverage is likely to decrease. The amount of leverage we use for our portfolio depends upon a variety of factors, such as, general economic, political and financial market conditions, the anticipated liquidity and price volatility of our assets, the availability and

cost of financing the assets, the credit worthiness of financing counterparties and the health of the U.S. residential mortgage and housing markets. At December 31, 2017, our aggregate debt-to-equity ratio was approximately 7.2 to 1. The debt-to-equity ratio is not a comprehensive statement of overall investment portfolio leverage which is affected by any leverage embedded in TBAs and derivative instruments.

Repurchase Agreements

We primarily finance our investments through repurchase agreements for which we pledge our assets. Our repurchase agreements have maturities generally ranging from one to three months, but in some cases longer. Repurchase agreements involve the transfer of the pledged collateral to a counterparty at an agreed upon price in exchange for such counterparty's simultaneous agreement to return the same security back to the borrower at a future date (i.e., the maturity of the borrowing). Under our repurchase agreements, we retain beneficial ownership of the pledged collateral, while the counterparty maintains custody of such collateral. At the maturity of a repurchase financing, unless the repurchase financing is renewed with the same counterparty, we are required to repay the loan, including any accrued interest, and concurrently reacquire custody of the pledged collateral or, with the consent of the counterparty, we may renew the repurchase financing at the then prevailing market interest rate and terms. The amount borrowed under our repurchase agreements is a specified percentage of the asset's applicable fair value, which is dependent on the collateral type. Our repurchase agreement counterparties generally require collateral in excess of the loan amount, or haircuts. As of December 31, 2017, our haircuts range from a low of 3.0% to a high of 5.0% for Agency RMBS, exclusive of IOs and IIOs for which the haircuts are as high as 20.0%, and Agency CMBS haircuts are 5.0%, exclusive of IOs and IIOs for which haircuts are as high as 15.0%. For Non-Agency RMBS, haircuts range from a low of 20.0% to a high of 26.0% and for Non-Agency CMBS, haircuts range from a low of 20.0% to a high of 40.0%. Haircuts for Whole-Loans are 20.0% and other securities range from a low of 22.5% to a high of 30.0%.

A significant decrease in asset value, advance rate, or an increase in the haircut could result in us having to sell assets in order to meet additional margin calls by our repurchase agreement counterparties. Our inability to post adequate collateral for a margin call by the counterparty could result in a condition of default under our repurchase agreements. We expect to mitigate our risk to margin calls by deploying leverage at the portfolio level at amounts below our available financing under our repurchase agreements.

In order to reduce our exposure of risk associated with concentration to any one repurchase agreement counterparty, we seek to diversify our exposure by entering into repurchase agreements with multiple counterparties. At December 31, 2017, we had repurchase agreements with 28 counterparties and outstanding borrowings with 16. Our total outstanding borrowings under our repurchase agreements was \$3.3 billion, with a maximum net exposure to any single repurchase agreement counterparty of \$65.5 million, or 14.1% of equity.

Convertible Senior Unsecured Notes

In October 2017, we issued \$115.0 million aggregate principal amount of 6.75% convertible senior unsecured notes, which included the underwriter's option to purchase \$15.0 million aggregate principal amount of the notes, for net proceeds to us of \$111.1 million. The notes mature on October 1, 2022, unless earlier converted, redeemed or repurchased by the holders pursuant to their terms, and are not redeemable by the Company except during the final three months prior to maturity. We view this financing as an attractive source of longer-term capital, which we believe was more cost efficient than issuing straight equity. We have and will continue to deploy the proceeds from the offering of the notes to acquire our target assets.

Our Hedging and Risk Management Strategy

Our overall portfolio strategy is designed to generate attractive returns to our investors through various economic cycles. We believe our broad approach to investing in the real estate market, which considers all categories of real estate assets, allows us to invest in a diversified portfolio and help mitigate our portfolio from risks that arise from investing in a single or limited collateral type. In connection with our risk management activities, we enter into a variety of derivative and non-derivative instruments. Our primary objective for acquiring these derivatives and non-derivative instruments is to mitigate our exposure to future events that are outside our control. Our derivative instruments are designed to mitigate the effects market risk and cash flow volatility associated with interest rate risk, including associated prepayment risk. As part of our hedging strategy, we may enter into, but not limited to, interest rate swaps, including forward starting swaps, interest rate swaptions, U.S. Treasury options, future contracts, TBAs, total return swaps, credit default swaps and foreign current swaps and forwards.

Regulation

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REIT Qualification

We elected to be taxed as a REIT under Section 856 through 860 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code"), commencing with our taxable year ended December 31, 2012. We will generally not be subject to corporate U.S. federal income tax to the extent that we make qualifying distributions to stockholders, and provided that we satisfy, on a continuing basis, through actual investment and operating results, the REIT requirements including certain asset, income, distribution and stock ownership tests. If we fail to qualify as a REIT, and do not qualify for certain statutory relief provisions, we will be subject to U.S. federal, state and local income taxes and may be precluded from qualifying as a REIT for the subsequent four taxable years following the year in which we lost our REIT qualification. The failure to qualify as a REIT could have a material adverse impact on our results of operations and amounts available for distribution to stockholders.

Investment Company Act Exemption

We conduct our operations so that we are not considered an investment company under the 1940 Act in reliance on the exemption provided by Section 3(c)(5)(C) of the 1940 Act. Section 3(c)(5)(C), as interpreted by the staff of the SEC, requires that: (i) at least 55% of our investment portfolio consist of "mortgages and other liens on and interest in real estate," or "qualifying real estate interests," and (ii) at least 80% of our investment portfolio consist of qualifying real estate interests plus "real estate-related assets." We have relied, and intend to continue to rely on current interpretations of the staff of the SEC in an effort to continue to qualify for an exemption from registration under the 1940 Act. For more information on the exemptions that we utilize refer to Item 1A, "Risk Factors" of this annual report on Form 10-K.

Competition

Our net income depends, in part, on our ability to acquire assets at favorable spreads over our borrowing costs. In acquiring our target assets, we compete with other REITs, specialty finance companies, savings and loan associations, banks, mortgage bankers, insurance companies, mutual funds, institutional investors, investment banking firms, financial institutions, governmental bodies and other entities. In addition, other REITs with similar asset acquisition objectives, including a number that have been recently formed and others that may be organized in the future, compete with us in acquiring assets and obtaining financing. These competitors may be significantly larger than us, may have access to greater capital and other resources or may have other advantages. In addition, some competitors may have higher risk tolerances or different risk assessments, which could allow them to consider a wider variety of investments, and establish more relationships, than us. Current market conditions may attract more competitors, which may increase the competition for sources of financing. An increase in the competition for sources of funding could adversely affect the availability and cost of financing, and thereby adversely affect the market price of our common stock.

Employees

We are externally managed pursuant to the management agreement dated May 9, 2012. We have no employees. All of our officers and two of our directors, James W. Hirschmann III and Jennifer W. Murphy, are employees of our Manager. Our Manager is responsible for, among other duties: (i) performing all of our day-to-day functions; (ii) determining investment criteria in conjunction with our Board of Directors; (iii) sourcing, analysing and executing investments, asset sales and financings; (iv) performing asset management duties; and (v) performing financial and accounting management.

Corporate Governance and Internet Address

We emphasize the importance of professional business conduct and ethics through our corporate governance initiatives. In 2014, the Board took additional steps to enhance governance by appointing a lead independent director and adding a fourth independent director so that our Board of Directors consists of two-thirds independent directors. The audit, nominating and corporate governance, and compensation committees of our Board of Directors are composed entirely of independent directors. We have adopted corporate governance guidelines and a code of business conduct and ethics, which delineate our standards for our officers and directors.

Our internet address is www.westernassetmcc.com. The information on our website is not incorporated by reference in this Annual Report on Form 10-K. We make available, free of charge through a link on our site, our annual reports on

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Form 10-K, quarterly reports on Form 10-Q, current reports on Form 8-K, and amendments to such reports, if any, as filed or furnished with the SEC, as soon as reasonably practicable after such filing or furnishing. Our site also contains our code of business conduct and ethics, corporate governance guidelines and the charters of our audit committee, nominating and corporate governance committee and compensation committee of our Board of Directors. Within the time period required by the rules of the SEC and the New York Stock Exchange, or NYSE, we will post on our website any amendment to our code of business conduct and ethics as defined in the code. Our documents filed with, or furnished to, the SEC are also available for review and copying by the public at the SEC's Public Reference Room at 100 F Street, NE., Washington, DC 20549 and at the SEC's website at www.sec.gov. Information regarding the operation of the Public Reference Room may be obtained by calling the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330.

Item 1A. Risk Factors

Our business and operations are subject to a number of risks and uncertainties, the occurrence of which could adversely affect our business, financial condition, results of operations and ability to make distributions to stockholders and could cause the value of our capital stock to decline.

Risks related to our business

We may not be able to successfully operate our business or generate sufficient revenue to make or sustain distributions to our stockholders.

We cannot assure you that we will be able to continue to operate our business successfully or implement our operating policies and strategies as described herein. The results of our operations depend on several factors, including the availability of opportunities for the acquisition of assets, the level and volatility of interest rates, the availability of adequate short and long-term financing, conditions in the financial markets and economic conditions.

We may change any of our strategies, policies or procedures without stockholder consent.

We may change any of our strategies, policies or procedures with respect to investments, acquisitions, growth, operations, indebtedness, capitalization, distributions, financing strategy and leverage at any time without the consent of our stockholders, which could result in an investment portfolio with a different risk profile. A change in our investment strategy may increase our exposure to interest rate risk, default risk and real estate market fluctuations. Furthermore, a change in our asset allocation could result in our making investments in asset categories different from those described herein. These changes could adversely affect our financial condition, results of operations, the market price of our common stock and our ability to make distributions to our stockholders.

We may be unable to operate within the parameters that allow us to be excluded from regulation as a commodity pool operator, which would subject us to additional regulation and compliance requirements, and could materially adversely affect our business and financial condition.

As a result of regulatory changes prompted by the Dodd-Frank Act, any investment fund that trades in swaps may be considered a "commodity pool," which would cause its operators to be regulated as a "commodity pool operator" (CPO). In December 2012, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission issued a no-action letter giving relief to operators of mortgage REITs from the requirements applicable to CPOs. In order to qualify, we must, among other non-operational requirements: (1) limit our initial margin and premiums for commodity interests (swaps and exchange-traded futures) to no more than 5% of the fair market value of our total assets; and (2) limit our net income from commodity interests that are not "qualifying hedging transactions" to less than 5% of our gross income. These parameters could limit the use of swaps by us below the level that our Manager would otherwise consider optimal or may lead to the registration of our Manager or directors as commodity pool operators, which will subject us to additional regulatory oversight, compliance and costs.

Changes to derivatives regulation may increase the costs of hedging for the Company.

The Dodd-Frank Act established a comprehensive new regulatory framework for derivative contracts commonly referred to as "swaps" which requires that many swaps be executed on a regulated exchange or trading platform ("mandatory exchange trading") and cleared through a central counterparty ("mandatory clearing"). In particular, certain of the swaps that the Manager may want to use to hedge the Company's exposure to fluctuations in interest rates are now subject to clearing and mandatory exchange trading. In addition, beginning in 2017, new requirements to variation margins apply to over-the-counter swaps and other derivatives not centrally cleared. For swaps that are subject to mandatory clearing, the Company is forced to pledge some of its assets to a clearing broker as initial margin, and for the life of such swaps, the assets pledged as initial margin generally will not be available to the Company for investment. For swaps that are subject to mandatory clearing and mandatory exchange trading, the Company likely will incur additional fees and costs for transactions in such swaps. Together, these requirements may make our Manager's hedging strategies more costly or may induce our Manager to change its hedging strategies. We cannot assure you that our internal controls over financial reporting will consistently be effective.

We are responsible for establishing and maintaining adequate internal control over financial reporting designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting and the preparation of financial statements for external purposes in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Because of its inherent limitations,

internal control over financial reporting may not prevent or detect misstatements. We cannot ensure you that there will not be any material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in our internal control over financial reporting in the future.

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Cybersecurity risk and cyber incidents may adversely affect our business by causing a disruption to our operations, a compromise or corruption of our confidential information and/or damage to our business relationships, all of which could negatively impact our financial results.

A cyber incident is considered to be any adverse event that threatens the confidentiality, integrity or availability of our information resources. These incidents may be an intentional attack or an unintentional event and could involve gaining unauthorized access to our information systems for purposes of misappropriating assets, stealing confidential information, corrupting data or causing operational disruption. The result of these incidents may include disrupted operations, misstated or unreliable financial data, liability for stolen assets or information, increased cybersecurity protection and insurance cost, litigation and damage to our investor relationships. As our reliance on technology has increased, so have the risks posed to both our information systems, both internal and those provided by our Manager and third party service providers. Our Manager has implemented processes, procedures and internal controls to help mitigate cybersecurity risks and cyber intrusions, but these measures, as well as our increased awareness of the nature and extent of a risk of a cyber incident, do not guarantee that our financial results, operations or confidential information will not be negatively impacted by such an incident.

Risks related to our investing strategy

Mortgage loan modification, refinancing programs, reduction in mortgage insurance premiums and minimum down payments and future legislative action may adversely affect the value of, and our returns on, Agency RMBS, Non-Agency RMBS and our additional portfolio assets.

The U.S. Government, through the U.S. Federal Reserve, the Federal Housing Administration, or the FHA, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, has implemented a number of federal programs designed to assist homeowners, including the Home Affordable Modification Program, or HAMP, which provides homeowners with assistance in avoiding residential mortgage loan foreclosures, the Hope for Homeowners Program, or H4H Program, which allowed certain distressed borrowers to refinance their mortgages into FHA-insured loans in order to avoid residential mortgage loan foreclosures, and the Home Affordable Refinance Program, or HARP, which allows borrowers who are current on their mortgage payments to refinance and reduce their monthly mortgage payments at loan-to-value ratios up to 125% (and, in some cases, above 125%) without new mortgage insurance. A number of these homeowners' assistance programs have been enhanced or expanded. HAMP expired on December 31, 2016, and borrowers who had requested assistance or to whom an offer of assistance had been extended as of that date had until September 30, 2017 to finalize their modification. HARP, which was scheduled to expire on December 31, 2016, has been extended to December 31, 2018. In addition, it is uncertain whether the new administration and Congressional majority will make any changes to these programs or any amendments to the bankruptcy laws to permit the modification of mortgage loans in bankruptcy proceedings. A significant number of loan modifications could result in a significant reduction in cash flows to the holders of the mortgage securities on an ongoing basis.

Amendments to the bankruptcy laws that result in the modification of outstanding mortgage loans may adversely affect the value of and the returns on, the assets that we may intend to acquire and the assets we currently hold. Especially with Non-Agency RMBS, a significant number of loan modifications with respect to a given security, including, but not limited to, those related to principal forgiveness and coupon reduction, resulting in increased prepayment rates, could negatively impact the realized yields and cash flows on such security. These loan modification programs, future legislative or regulatory actions, including possible amendments to the bankruptcy laws, which result in the modification of outstanding residential mortgage loans, as well as changes in the requirements necessary to qualify for refinancing mortgage loans with FNMA, FHLMC or GNMA may adversely affect the value of, and the returns on, Agency RMBS and Non-Agency RMBS.

In October 2014, the FHA announced that it would allow FNMA and FHLMC to purchase loans with three percent (3%) down payments, thereby reducing the down payment requirement for borrowers to access mortgage loans which are eligible for purchase and/or guarantee by these U.S. Government sponsored entities or GSEs. Further, in January 2015, the Obama administration announced a 50 basis point (0.50%) reduction in the annual mortgage insurance premium imposed by the FHA on mortgage loans guaranteed by GNMA. The reduction in the minimum down payment along with lowering all-in mortgage interest rates on GSE sponsored residential mortgage loans will likely

increase the attractiveness of refinancing as well as purchases of new and existing homes, thereby increasing the prepayment rates on the mortgage loans underlying our existing RMBS. This may adversely affect the value of, and the returns on, these assets, especially those which we acquired at a premium.

The payments of principal and interest we receive on our Agency RMBS, which depend directly upon payments on the mortgages underlying such securities, are guaranteed by FNMA, FHLMC and GNMA. FNMA and FHLMC are U.S. Government-sponsored entities, or GSEs, but their guarantees are not backed by the full faith and credit of the United States. GNMA is part of a U.S. Government agency and its guarantees are backed by the full faith and credit of the United States.

In response to general market instability and more specifically, the financial conditions of FNMA and FHLMC, in July 2008, the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008, or HERA, established a new regulator for FNMA and FHLMC, the U.S. Federal Housing Finance Agency, or the FHFA. In September 2008, the U.S. Treasury, the FHFA and the U.S. Federal Reserve announced a comprehensive action plan to help stabilize the financial markets, support the availability of mortgage financing and protect taxpayers. Under this plan, among other things, the FHFA was appointed as conservator of both FNMA and FHLMC, allowing the FHFA to control the actions of the two GSEs, without forcing them to liquidate, which would be the case under receivership. Importantly, the primary focus of the plan was to increase the availability of mortgage financing by allowing these GSEs to continue to grow their guarantee business without limit, while limiting the size of their retained mortgage and Agency security portfolios and requiring that these portfolios be reduced over time.

Although the U.S. Government has committed to support the positive net worth of FNMA and FHLMC, there can be no assurance that these actions will be adequate for their needs. These uncertainties lead to questions about the availability of, and trading market for, Agency RMBS. Despite the steps taken by the U.S. Government, FNMA and FHLMC could default on their guarantee obligations which would materially and adversely affect the value of our Agency RMBS. Accordingly, if these government actions are inadequate and the GSEs continue to suffer losses or cease to exist, our business, operations and financial condition could be materially and adversely affected.

In recent year, lawmakers have proposed new legislations that would wind down the GSEs. In addition, the U.S. Government under the Trump Administration has made public comments regarding housing policy reforms, of which the scope and nature of the actions would be difficult to predict. These planned actions, including the eventual adoption of new legislations by the U.S. government, create market uncertainty with respect to the GSEs which could have a material and adverse effect on the quality and value of our Agency RMBS. The future roles of FNMA and FHLMC could be significantly reduced and the nature of their guarantee obligations could be considerably limited relative to historical measurements. Any such changes to the nature of their guarantee obligations could redefine what constitutes an Agency security and could have broad adverse implications for the market and our business, operations and financial condition. If FNMA or FHLMC were eliminated, or their structures were to change radically (i.e., limitation or removal of the guarantee obligation), or their market share reduced because of required price increases or lower limits on the loans they can guarantee, we could be unable to acquire additional Agency RMBS and our existing Agency RMBS could be materially and adversely impacted.

We are subject to the risk that U.S. Government agencies and/or GSEs may not be able to fully satisfy their guarantees of Agency RMBS or that these guarantee obligations may be repudiated, which may adversely affect the value of our assets and our ability to sell or finance these securities.

The interest and principal payments we receive on the Agency RMBS in which we invest are guaranteed by FNMA, FHLMC or GNMA. Unlike the GNMA securities in which we may invest, the principal and interest on securities issued by FNMA and FHLMC are not guaranteed by the U.S. government. All of the Agency RMBS in which we invest depend on a steady stream of payments on the mortgages underlying the securities.

As conservator of FNMA and FHLMC, the FHFA may disaffirm or repudiate contracts (subject to certain limitations for qualified financial contracts) that FHLMC or FNMA entered into prior to the FHFA's appointment as conservator if it determines, in its sole discretion, that performance of the contract is burdensome and that disaffirmation or repudiation of the contract promotes the orderly administration of its affairs. The HERA requires the FHFA to exercise its right to disaffirm or repudiate most contracts within a reasonable period of time after its appointment as conservator. FNMA and FHLMC have disclosed that the FHFA has disaffirmed certain consulting and other contracts that these entities entered into prior to the FHFA's appointment as conservator. FHLMC and FNMA have also disclosed that the FHFA has advised that it does not intend to repudiate any guarantee obligation relating to FNMA's and FHLMC's mortgage-related securities, because the FHFA views repudiation as incompatible with the goals of the conservatorship. In addition, the HERA provides that mortgage loans and mortgage-related assets that have been transferred to a FHLMC or FNMA securitization trust must be held for the beneficial owners of the related mortgage-related securities, and cannot be used to satisfy the general creditors of FHLMC or FNMA.

If the guarantee obligations of FHLMC or FNMA were repudiated by the FHFA, payments of principal and/or interest to holders of Agency RMBS issued by FHLMC or FNMA would be reduced in the event of any borrowers' late payments or failure to pay or a servicer's failure to remit borrower payments to the trust. In that case, trust administration and servicing fees could be paid from mortgage payments prior to distributions to holders of Agency RMBS. Any actual direct compensatory damages owed due to the repudiation of FHLMC or FNMA's guarantee obligations may not be sufficient to offset any shortfalls experienced by holders of Agency RMBS. The FHFA also has the right to transfer or sell any asset or liability of FHLMC or FNMA, including its guarantee obligation, without any approval, assignment or consent. If the FHFA were to transfer FHLMC or FNMA's guarantee obligations to another party, holders of Agency RMBS would have to rely on that party for satisfaction of the guarantee obligation and would be exposed to the credit risk of that party.

Beginning in 2014, we have invested in GSE Risk Sharing Securities issued by FNMA and FHLMC. Principal and interest payments on these securities are based on the performance of a specified pool of Agency residential mortgages. The payments due on these securities, however, are not secured by the referenced mortgages, but are full faith and credit obligations of Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac respectively. There is no implicit or explicit guarantee of these obligations by FHFA or that FHFA would satisfy such obligations if FNMA and/or FHLMC were to default. We operate in a highly competitive market for investment opportunities and competition may limit our ability to acquire desirable investments in our portfolio assets and could also affect the pricing of these securities.

We operate in a highly competitive market for investment opportunities. Currently, our profitability depends, in large part, on our ability to acquire our portfolio assets at attractive prices. In acquiring these assets, we compete with a variety of institutional investors, including other REITs, specialty finance companies, public and private funds (including other funds managed by our Manager), commercial and investment banks, commercial finance and insurance companies and other financial institutions. Many of our competitors are substantially larger and have considerably greater financial, technical, marketing and other resources than we do. Other REITs have recently raised, or may raise, additional capital, and may have investment objectives that overlap with ours, which may create additional competition for investment opportunities. Some competitors may have a lower cost of funds and access to funding sources that may not be available to us, such as funding from the U.S. Government. Many of our competitors are not subject to the operating constraints associated with REIT tax compliance or maintenance of an exemption from the 1940 Act. In addition, some of our competitors may have higher risk tolerances or different risk assessments, which could allow them to consider a wider variety of investments and establish more relationships than us. Furthermore, competition for investments in our portfolio assets may lead to the price of such assets increasing, which may further limit our ability to generate desired returns. We cannot assure you that the competitive pressures we face will not have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. Also, as a result of this competition, desirable investments in these assets may be limited in the future and we may not be able to take advantage of attractive investment opportunities from time to time, as we can provide no assurance that we will be able to identify and make investments that are consistent with our investment objectives.

A lack of liquidity in our investments may adversely affect our business. Liquidity in fixed income markets has declined in recent years.

The assets we acquire are not publicly traded. A lack of liquidity may result from the absence of a willing buyer or an established market for these assets, as well as legal or contractual restrictions on resale or the unavailability of financing for these assets. In addition, mortgage-related assets generally experience periods of illiquidity, especially during periods of economic stress such as the recent economic recession which resulted in increased delinquencies and defaults with respect to residential and commercial mortgage loans. The illiquidity of our investments may make it difficult for us to sell such investments if the need or desire arises. In addition, if we are required to liquidate all or a portion of our portfolio quickly, we may realize significantly less than the value at which we have previously recorded our investments. Further, we may face other restrictions on our ability to liquidate an investment in a business entity to the extent that we or our Manager has or could be attributed with material, non-public information regarding such business entity. As a result, our ability to vary our portfolio in response to changes in economic and other conditions may be relatively limited, which could adversely affect our results of operations and financial condition.

These risks have increased in recent years due to general declines in liquidity in fixed income markets. As a result of both the experience of dealers and other counterparties during the 2007-2010 credit issues and the resulting changes in regulatory and capital burdens on these entities, especially banks, market liquidity in fixed income has generally declined. Dealers and other market intermediaries are less likely to be prepared to hold bonds in inventory and take balance sheet risks, resulting in a significant reduction in market making activity. In addition, many dealers have exited one or more sectors of the fixed income markets.

Adverse developments in the broader residential mortgage market may adversely affect the value of the assets in which we invest.

Since 2007, the residential mortgage market in the United States has experienced a variety of unprecedented difficulties and changed economic conditions, including defaults, credit losses and liquidity concerns. Certain

commercial banks, investment banks and insurance companies announced extensive losses from exposure to the residential mortgage market. These losses reduced financial industry capital, leading to reduced liquidity for some institutions. These factors have impacted investor perception of the risk associated with real estate-related assets, including Agency RMBS and other high-quality RMBS assets. As a result, values for RMBS assets, including some Agency RMBS and other AAA-rated RMBS assets, have experienced a certain amount of volatility. Further increased volatility and deterioration in the broader residential mortgage and RMBS markets may adversely affect the performance and market value of the Agency RMBS and Non-Agency RMBS in which we invest.

Our most significant investments, to date, have been Agency RMBS and to a lesser extent Non-Agency RMBS and Agency and Non-Agency CMBS. We need to rely on our securities as collateral for our financings. Any decline in their value, or perceived market uncertainty about their value, would likely make it difficult for us to obtain financing on favorable terms or at all, or

maintain our compliance with terms of any financing arrangements already in place. The securities we acquire are classified for accounting purposes as available-for-sale. All assets classified as available-for-sale are reported at fair value, based on market prices from third party sources. We have elected to include any unrealized gains and losses in our earnings. If market conditions result in a decline in the fair value of our assets, our financial position and results of operations could be adversely affected.

A prolonged economic recession and further declining real estate values could impair our assets and harm our operations.

The risks associated with our business are more severe during economic recessions and are compounded by declining real estate values. The Non-Agency RMBS, Non-Agency CMBS and Whole-Loans in which we invest a part of our capital will be particularly sensitive to these risks. Declining real estate values will likely reduce the level of new mortgage loan originations since borrowers often use appreciation in the value of their existing properties to support the purchase of additional properties. Borrowers will also be less able to pay principal and interest on loans underlying the securities in which we invest if the value of residential and commercial real estate weakens further. Further, declining real estate values significantly increase the likelihood that we will incur losses on Non-Agency RMBS, Non-Agency CMBS and Whole-Loans in the event of default because the value of collateral on the mortgages underlying such securities may be insufficient to cover the outstanding principal amount of the loan. Any sustained period of increased payment delinquencies, foreclosures or losses could adversely affect our net interest income from Non-Agency RMBS, Non-Agency CMBS and Whole-Loans in our portfolio, which could have an adverse effect on our financial condition, results of operations and our ability to make distributions to our stockholders.

Our investments in Non-Agency RMBS are generally subject to losses.

In general, losses on a mortgaged property securing a mortgage loan included in a securitization will be borne first by the equity holder of the property, then by a cash reserve fund or letter of credit, if any, then by the "first loss" subordinated security holder and then by the holder of a higher-rated security. In the event of default and the exhaustion of any equity support, reserve fund, letter of credit, mezzanine loans or B-Notes, and any classes of securities junior to those in which we invest, we will not be able to recover all of our investment in the securities we purchase. In addition, if the underlying mortgage portfolio has been overvalued by the originator, or if the values subsequently decline, less collateral is available to satisfy interest and principal payments due on the related Non-Agency RMBS. The prices of lower credit quality securities are generally less sensitive to interest rate changes than more highly rated investments, but more sensitive to adverse economic downturns or individual issuer developments.

The mortgage loans underlying the Non-Agency RMBS that we invest in are subject to defaults, foreclosure timeline extension, fraud and residential price depreciation and unfavorable modification of loan principal amount, interest rate and amortization of principal, which could result in losses to us.

Our investments in Non-Agency RMBS are subject to the risks of defaults, foreclosure timeline extension, fraud and home price depreciation and unfavorable modification of loan principal amount, interest rate and amortization of principal, accompanying the underlying residential mortgage loans. The ability of a borrower to repay a mortgage loan secured by a residential property is dependent upon the income or assets of the borrower. A number of factors may impair borrowers' abilities to repay their loans, including:

- adverse changes in national and local economic and market conditions;
- changes in governmental laws and regulations, fiscal policies and zoning ordinances and the related costs of compliance with laws and regulations, fiscal policies and ordinances;
- costs of remediation and liabilities associated with environmental conditions such as indoor mold;
- the potential for uninsured or under-insured property losses;
- acts of God, including earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters, which may result in uninsured losses; and
- acts of war or terrorism, including the consequences of terrorist attacks, such as those that occurred on September 11, 2001.

In the event of defaults on the residential mortgage loans that underlie our investments in Non-Agency RMBS and the exhaustion of any underlying or any additional credit support, we may not realize our anticipated return on our

investments and we may incur a loss on these investments. In addition, our investments in Non-Agency RMBS will be backed by residential real property but, in contrast to Agency RMBS, the principal and interest will not be guaranteed by a U.S. Government agency or a GSE. The ability of a borrower to repay these loans or other financial assets is dependent upon the income or assets of these borrowers.

We may be affected by deficiencies in foreclosure practices of third parties, as well as related delays in the foreclosure process.

Allegations of deficiencies in foreclosure documentation and servicing and foreclosure practices by several large mortgage servicers have raised various concerns relating to foreclosure practices. As a result of these alleged deficiencies in foreclosure practices, a number of servicers temporarily suspended foreclosure proceedings beginning in the second half of 2010 while they evaluated their foreclosure practices. In addition, on February 9, 2012, a group consisting of state attorneys general and state bank and mortgage regulators in 49 states reached a settlement with the largest mortgage servicers regarding foreclosure practices in the states' various jurisdictions. On January 7, 2013, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System announced a settlement with a number of mortgage servicers in lieu of continuing a foreclosure review process, under which borrowers who believed they were financially harmed by the foreclosure process in 2009 and 2010 were able to request an independent review of the process. The settlement, which includes funds for both direct payments to eligible borrowers and for other assistance such as loan modifications and forgiveness of deficiency judgments, ended the case-by-case reviews. Although servicers have generally ended their suspension of foreclosures, the processing of foreclosures continues to be slow in many states due to continuing issues in the servicer foreclosure process, including efforts by servicers to comply with regulatory consent orders and requirements, recent changes in the state foreclosure laws, court rules and proceedings and the pipeline of foreclosures resulting from these delays as well as the elevated level of foreclosures caused by the housing market downturn. We may incur substantial legal fees and court costs in acquiring a property through contested foreclosure or bankruptcy proceedings. We intend to continue to monitor and review the issues raised by the alleged improper foreclosure practices.

Prior to making investments in RMBS, our Manager carefully considers many factors, including housing prices and foreclosure timelines, and estimate loss assumptions. The concerns about deficiencies in foreclosure practices of servicers and related delays in the foreclosure process may impact our loss assumptions and affect the values of, and our returns on, our investments in RMBS. We cannot predict exactly how the servicing and foreclosure matters or the resulting litigation or settlement agreements will affect our business and cannot assure you that these matters will not impair our performance and reduce the return on our investments.

The commercial mortgage loans underlying the CMBS we may acquire are subject to defaults, foreclosure timeline extension, fraud and commercial price depreciation and unfavorable modification of loan principal amount, interest rate and amortization of principal, which could result in losses to us.

CMBS may be secured by a single commercial mortgage loan or a pool of commercial mortgage loans. Commercial mortgage loans may be secured by multifamily or commercial property and are subject to risks of delinquency and foreclosure, and risks of loss that may be greater than similar risks associated with loans made on the security of residential property. The ability of a borrower to repay a loan secured by an income-producing property typically is dependent primarily upon the successful operation of such property rather than upon the existence of independent income or assets of the borrower. If the net operating income of the property is reduced, the borrower's ability or willingness to repay the loan may be impaired. Net operating income of an income-producing property can be affected by, among other things,

- tenant mix;
- success of tenant businesses;
- property management decisions;
- property location and condition;
- competition from comparable types of properties;
- changes in laws that increase operating expenses or limit rents that may be charged;
- any need to address environmental contamination at the property or the occurrence of any uninsured casualty at the property;
- changes in national, regional or local economic conditions and/or specific industry segments;
- declines in regional or local real estate values;
- declines in regional or local rental or occupancy rates;
- increases in interest rates;
- real estate tax rates and other operating expenses;

•changes in governmental rules, regulations and fiscal policies, including environmental legislation; and

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acts of God, terrorist attacks, social unrest and civil disturbances.

If our Manager overestimates the loss-adjusted yields of our CMBS investments, we may experience losses.

Our Manager will analyze any CMBS investments we may acquire based on loss-adjusted yields, taking into account estimated future losses on the mortgage loans included in the securitization's pool of loans, and the estimated impact of these losses on expected future cash flows. Our Manager's loss estimates may not prove accurate, as actual results may vary from estimates. In the event that our Manager underestimates the pool level losses relative to the price we pay for a particular CMBS investment, we may experience losses with respect to such investment.

We do not control the special servicing of the mortgage loans included in the CMBS in which we invest and, in such cases, the special servicer may take actions that could adversely affect our interests.

With respect to CMBS in which we invest, overall control over the special servicing of the related underlying mortgage loans will be held by a "directing certificateholder" or a "controlling class representative," which is appointed by the holders of the most subordinate class of CMBS in such series. We may not have the right to appoint the directing certificateholder. In connection with the servicing of the specially serviced mortgage loans, the related special servicer may, at the direction of the directing certificateholder, take actions with respect to the specially serviced mortgage loans that could adversely affect our interests.

The residential and/or commercial mortgages which we may acquire in the form of whole-loans are subject to individual borrower credit risk.

To the extent we acquire residential or commercial first lien mortgages or whole-loans; we will be subject to individual credit risk. While such mortgages will be secured by single family residences or commercial properties, we will rely on the borrower's willingness to make timely payments. In certain states our ability to recover against a borrower on a residential property may be limited to either recovering from the borrower or foreclosing on the property. In either case, depending on state and local laws, such recovery could take an extended period of time and expense, during which period we would not be receiving any payments, thereby negatively impacting our cash flow. Similarly, to the extent a commercial loan is non-recourse, our recovery will be limited to the underlying real property which depending on several factors, including the location of such property, could take an extended period of time and expense, thereby negatively impacting our cash flow.

The receivables underlying the ABS we may acquire are subject to credit exposure, which could result in losses to us. ABS are securities backed by various asset classes including auto loans, student loans, credit card loans, equipment loans, floor plan loans and small business loans fully guaranteed as to principal and interest by the U.S. Small Business Administration, or the SBA. ABS remain subject to the credit exposure of the underlying receivables. In the event of increased rates of delinquency with respect to any receivables underlying our ABS, we may not realize our anticipated return on these investments.

Our investments are recorded at fair value, and quoted prices or observable inputs may not be available to determine such value, resulting in the use of significant unobservable inputs to determine value.

We expect that the values of some of our investments may not be readily determinable. We measure the fair value of these investments on at least a monthly basis. The fair value at which our assets are recorded may not be an indication of their realizable value. Ultimate realization of the value of an asset depends to a great extent on economic and other conditions that are beyond the control of our Manager, our Company or our Board of Directors. Further, fair value is only an estimate based on good faith judgment of the price at which an investment can be sold since market prices of investments can only be determined by negotiation between a willing buyer and seller. If we were to liquidate a particular asset, the realized value may be more than or less than the amount at which such asset is valued.

Accordingly, the value of our common stock could be adversely affected by our determinations regarding the fair value of our investments, whether in the applicable period or in the future. Additionally, such valuations may fluctuate over short periods of time.

Our determination of the fair value of our investments for GAAP includes inputs provided by third party dealers and pricing services. Valuations of certain investments in which we invest are often difficult to obtain. In general, dealers and pricing services heavily disclaim their valuations. Dealers may claim to furnish valuations only as an accommodation and without special compensation, and so they may disclaim any and all liability for any direct,

incidental, or consequential damages arising out of any inaccuracy or incompleteness in valuations, including any act of negligence or breach of any warranty. Depending on the complexity and illiquidity of a security, valuations of the same security can vary substantially from one dealer or pricing service to another. Therefore, our results of operations for a given period could be adversely affected if our determinations regarding the fair market value of these investments are materially different than the values that we ultimately realize upon their disposal. Due to an overall increase in market volatility, the valuation process has been particularly challenging recently as market events have made valuations of certain assets more difficult, unpredictable and volatile.

Declines in value of the assets in which we invest will adversely affect our financial position and results of operations, and make it more costly to finance these assets.

We use our investments as collateral for our financings. Any decline in their value, or perceived market uncertainty about their value, would likely make it difficult for us to obtain financing on favorable terms or at all, or maintain our compliance with terms of any financing arrangements already in place. Our investments in mortgage-backed securities are recorded at fair value under a fair value option election at the time of purchase with changes in fair value reported in earnings. As a result, a decline in fair values of our mortgage-backed securities could reduce both our earnings and stockholders' equity. If market conditions result in a decline in the fair value of our assets, our financial position and results of operations could be adversely affected.

An increase in interest rates may cause a decrease in the availability of certain of our portfolio assets, which could adversely affect our ability to acquire assets that satisfy our investment objectives and to generate income and make distributions.

Rising interest rates generally reduce the demand for mortgage loans due to the higher cost of borrowing. A reduction in the volume of mortgage loans originated may affect the volume of our portfolio assets available to us, which could adversely affect our ability to acquire assets that satisfy our investment objectives. Rising interest rates may also cause our assets that were issued prior to an interest rate increase to provide yields that are below prevailing market interest rates. If rising interest rates cause us to be unable to acquire a sufficient volume of our portfolio assets with a yield that is above our borrowing cost, our ability to satisfy our investment objectives and to generate income and make distributions may be materially and adversely affected.

The relationship between short-term and longer-term interest rates is often referred to as the "yield curve." Ordinarily, short-term interest rates are lower than longer-term interest rates. If short-term interest rates rise disproportionately relative to longer-term interest rates (a flattening of the yield curve), our borrowing costs may increase more rapidly than the interest income earned on our assets. Because our investments, on average, generally bear interest based on longer-term rates than our borrowings, a flattening of the yield curve would tend to decrease our net income and the market value of our net assets. Additionally, to the extent cash flows from investments that return scheduled and unscheduled principal are reinvested, the spread between the yields on the new investments and available borrowing rates may decline, which would likely decrease our net income. It is also possible that short-term interest rates may exceed longer-term interest rates (a yield curve inversion); in which event our borrowing costs may exceed our interest income and we could incur operating losses.

Increases in interest rates could adversely affect the value of our investments and cause our interest expense to increase, which could result in reduced earnings or losses and negatively affect our profitability as well as the cash available for distribution to our stockholders.

In a normal yield curve environment, generally our investments decline in value if long-term interest rates increase. Declines in market value may ultimately reduce earnings or result in losses to us, which may negatively affect cash available for distribution to our stockholders.

A significant risk associated with our portfolio assets is the risk that both long-term and short-term interest rates will increase significantly. If long-term rates increased significantly, the market value of these investments would decline, and the duration and weighted average life of the investments would increase. We could realize a loss if the securities were sold. At the same time, an increase in short-term interest rates would increase the amount of interest owed on any repurchase agreements we may enter into, thereby potentially reducing the net interest margin we earn on our investments and the income available for distribution to our shareholders.

Market values of our investments may decline without any general increase in interest rates for a number of reasons, such as increases or expected increases in defaults, or increases or expected increases in voluntary prepayments for those investments that are subject to prepayment risk or widening of credit spreads.

In addition, our operating results depend in large part on the difference between the income from our assets and our financing costs. We anticipate that, in most cases in a period of rising interest rates, the income from such assets will respond more slowly to interest rate fluctuations than the cost of our borrowings. Consequently, changes in interest rates, particularly short-term interest rates, may significantly influence our net income. Increases in these rates will

tend to decrease our net income and market value of our assets.

Interest rate mismatches between our RMBS backed by ARMs or hybrid ARMs and our borrowings used to fund our purchases of these assets may cause us to suffer losses.

We may fund our RMBS with borrowings that have interest rates that adjust more frequently than the interest rate indices and repricing terms of RMBS backed by adjustable-rate mortgages, or ARMs, or hybrid ARMs. Accordingly, if short-term interest rates increase, our borrowing costs may increase faster than the interest rates on RMBS backed by ARMs or hybrid ARMs adjust. As a result, in a period of rising interest rates, we could experience a decrease in net income or a net loss.

In most cases, the interest rate indices and repricing terms of RMBS backed by ARMs or hybrid ARMs and our borrowings will not be identical, thereby potentially creating an interest rate mismatch between our investments and our borrowings. While the historical spread between relevant short-term interest rate indices has been relatively stable, there have been periods when the spread between these indices was volatile. During periods of changing interest rates, these interest rate index mismatches could reduce our net income or produce a net loss, and adversely affect the level of our dividends and the market price of our common stock.

In addition, RMBS backed by ARMs or hybrid ARMs will typically be subject to lifetime interest rate caps that limit the amount an interest rate can increase through the maturity of the RMBS. However, our borrowings under repurchase agreements typically are not subject to similar restrictions. Accordingly, in a period of rapidly increasing interest rates, the interest rates paid on our borrowings could increase without limitation while caps could limit the interest rates on these types of RMBS. This problem is magnified for RMBS backed by ARMs or hybrid ARMs that are not fully indexed. Further, some RMBS backed by ARMs or hybrid ARMs may be subject to periodic payment caps that result in a portion of the interest being deferred and added to the principal outstanding. As a result, we may receive less cash income on these types of RMBS than we need to pay interest on our related borrowings. These factors could reduce our net interest income and cause us to suffer a loss during periods of rising interest rates.

As of December 31, 2017, none of our Agency RMBS, excluding Interest-Only Strips, were secured by ARMs or hybrid ARMs. Our Non-Agency RMBS, however, were secured by ARMs, Hybrid ARMS, pay option ARMs and fixed-rate mortgages. Further, there can be no assurance that this will not change in the future.

Interest rate fluctuations may adversely affect the level of our net income and the value of our assets and common stock.

Interest rates are highly sensitive to many factors, including governmental monetary and tax policies, domestic and international economic and political considerations and other factors beyond our control. Interest rate fluctuations present a variety of risks, including the risk of a narrowing of the difference between asset yields and borrowing rates, flattening or inversion of the yield curve and fluctuating prepayment rates, and may adversely affect our income and the value of our assets and common stock.

Increases in interest rates may negatively affect the market value of the fixed-rate mortgages and hybrid ARMs in which we may invest. Our investments in these mortgage-backed securities are recorded at fair value under a fair value option election at the time of purchase with changes in fair value reported in earnings and any decrease in our earnings could cause the market value of our common stock to decline. In addition, rising interest rates generally reduce the demand for consumer and commercial credit, including mortgage loans, due to the higher cost of borrowing. A reduction in the volume of mortgage loans originated may affect the volume of MBS available to us, which could affect our ability to acquire assets that satisfy our investment objectives.

Since the onset of the economic recession in 2008, the Federal Reserve has maintained an accommodative monetary policy. Recent improvements in the U.S. labor market and overall U.S. economy have led to a discussion of the return of monetary policy to a more "normal" stature. According to its meeting in January 2018, the Federal Open Market Committee, or FOMC, left the federal funds rate at 1.5% since inflation is still below target, even though unemployment is low. The FOMC expects inflation to meet its 2% target in 2018 and expects to gradually raise the federal funds rate to its normal level of 2%. The FOMC will allow \$12 billion of Treasury securities to mature without replacing them. It will do the same with \$8 billion of mortgage-backed securities. The Federal Reserve is gradually winding down the \$4 trillion in holdings it acquired during quantitative easing. In determining the timing and size of future adjustments to the target range for the federal funds rate, the FOMC intends to assess realized and expected economic conditions relative to its objectives of maximum employment and 2% inflation. This assessment will take into account a wide range of information, including measures of labor market conditions, indicators of inflation pressures and inflation expectations, and readings on financial and international developments. Accordingly, we expect potentially three rate increases in 2018. We cannot project with certainty when and the rate at which the Federal Reserve will continue to increase the federal funds rate and what impact that will have on our business and operating results.

Changes in prepayment rates may adversely affect our profitability.

The RMBS assets we acquire are backed by pools of residential mortgage loans. We receive payments, generally, from the payments that are made on these underlying residential mortgage loans. While commercial mortgages frequently include limitations on the ability of the borrower to prepay, residential mortgages generally do not. When borrowers prepay their residential mortgage loans at rates that are faster than expected, the net result is prepayments that are faster than expected on the related RMBS. These faster than expected payments may adversely affect our profitability.

We may purchase RMBS assets that have a higher interest rate than the then prevailing market interest rate. In exchange for this higher interest rate, we may pay a premium to par value to acquire the asset. In accordance with accounting rules, we amortize this premium over the expected term of the asset based on our prepayment assumptions. If the asset is prepaid in whole or in part

at a faster than expected rate, however, we must expense all or a part of the remaining unamortized portion of the premium that was paid at the time of the purchase, which will adversely affect our profitability.

Prepayment rates generally increase when interest rates fall and decrease when interest rates rise, but changes in prepayment rates are difficult to predict. House price appreciation, while increasing the value of the collateral underlying our RMBS, may increase prepayment rates as borrowers may be able to refinance at more favorable terms. Prepayments can also occur when borrowers default on their residential mortgages and the mortgages are prepaid from the proceeds of a foreclosure sale of the property (an involuntary prepayment), or when borrowers sell the property and use the sale proceeds to prepay the mortgage as part of a physical relocation. Prepayment rates also may be affected by conditions in the housing and financial markets, increasing defaults on residential mortgage loans, which could lead to an acceleration of the payment of the related principal, general economic conditions and the relative interest rates on fixed-rate mortgages and ARMs. While we seek to manage prepayment risk, in selecting RMBS investments we must balance prepayment risk against other risks, the potential returns of each investment and the cost of hedging our risks. No strategy can completely insulate us from prepayment or other such risks, and we may deliberately retain exposure to prepayment or other risks.

In addition, a decrease in prepayment rates may adversely affect our profitability. When borrowers prepay their residential mortgage loans at slower than expected rates, prepayments on the RMBS may be slower than expected. These slower than expected payments may adversely affect our profitability. We may purchase RMBS assets that have a lower interest rate than the then prevailing market interest rate. In exchange for this lower interest rate, we may pay a discount to par value to acquire the asset. In accordance with accounting rules, we accrete this discount over the expected term of the asset based on our prepayment assumptions. If the asset is prepaid at a slower than expected rate, however, we must accrete the remaining portion of the discount at a slower than expected rate. This will extend the expected life of the asset and result in a lower than expected yield on assets purchased at a discount to par. We could be materially and adversely affected by poor market conditions where the properties securing the mortgage loans underlying our investments are geographically concentrated.

Our performance depends on the economic conditions in markets in which the properties securing the mortgage loans underlying our investments are concentrated. As of December 31, 2017, a substantial portion of our investments had underlying properties in California. Our financial condition, results of operations, the market price of our common stock and our ability to make distributions to our stockholders could be materially and adversely affected by this geographic concentration if market conditions, such as an oversupply of space or a reduction in demand for real estate in an area, deteriorate in California. Moreover, due to the geographic concentration of properties securing the mortgages underlying our investments, the Company may be disproportionately affected by general risks such as natural disasters, including major wildfires, floods and earthquakes, severe or inclement weather, and acts of terrorism should such developments occur in or near the markets in California in which such properties are located.

We may make investments in non U.S. dollar denominated securities, which will be subject to currency rate exposure and risks associated with the uncertainty of foreign laws and markets.

Some of our real estate-related securities investments may be denominated in foreign currencies, and therefore, we expect to have currency risk exposure to any such foreign currencies. A change in foreign currency exchange rates may have an adverse impact on returns on our non U.S. dollar denominated investments. Although we may hedge our foreign currency risk subject to the REIT income tests, we may not be able to do so successfully and may incur losses on these investments as a result of exchange rate fluctuations. To the extent that we invest in non U.S. dollar denominated securities, in addition to risks inherent in the investment in securities generally discussed in this Form 10-K, we will also be subject to risks associated with the uncertainty of foreign laws and markets including, but not limited to, unexpected changes in regulatory requirements, political and economic instability in certain geographic locations, difficulties in managing international operations, currency exchange controls, potentially adverse tax consequences, additional accounting and control expenses and the administrative burden of complying with a wide variety of foreign laws.

We are highly dependent on information systems and systems failures could significantly disrupt our business, which may, in turn, negatively affect the market price of our common stock and our ability to make distributions to all stockholders.

Our business is highly dependent on communications and information systems of our Manager and other third party service providers. Any failure or interruption of our Manager's or other third party service providers' systems could cause delays or other problems in our securities trading activities, which could have a material adverse effect on our operating results and negatively affect the market price of our common stock and our ability to make distributions to our stockholders.

Loss of our exemption from regulation pursuant to the 1940 Act would adversely affect us.

We conduct our business so as not to become regulated as an investment company under the 1940 Act in reliance on the exemption provided by Section 3(c)(5)(C) of the 1940 Act. Section 3(c)(5)(C), as interpreted by the staff of the SEC, requires that: (i) at least 55% of our investment portfolio consist of "mortgages and other liens on and interest in real estate," or "qualifying real estate interests," and (ii) at least 80% of our investment portfolio consist of qualifying real estate interests plus "real estate-related assets." In satisfying this 55% requirement, based on pronouncements of the SEC staff, we may treat whole pool Agency RMBS as qualifying real estate interests. The SEC staff has not issued guidance with respect to whole pool Non-Agency RMBS. Accordingly, based on our own judgment and analysis of the SEC's pronouncements with respect to whole pool Agency RMBS, we may also treat Non-Agency RMBS issued with respect to an underlying pool of mortgage loans in which we hold all of the certificates issued by the pool as qualifying real estate interests. We currently treat partial pool Agency, Non-Agency RMBS and partial pool CMBS as real estate-related assets. We treat any ABS, interest rate swaps or other derivative hedging transactions we enter into as miscellaneous assets that will not exceed 20% of our total assets. We rely on guidance published by the SEC staff or on our analyses of guidance published with respect to other types of assets to determine which assets are qualifying real estate assets and real estate-related assets.

The SEC in 2011 solicited public comment on a wide range of issues relating to Section 3(c)(5)(C), including the nature of the assets that qualify for purposes of the exemption and whether mortgage REITs should be regulated in a manner similar to investment companies. To date the staff has not issued any additional guidance. There can be no assurance that the laws and regulations governing the 1940 Act status of REITs, including the guidance of the Division of Investment Management of the SEC regarding this exemption, will not change in a manner that adversely affects our operations. To the extent that the SEC or its staff publishes new or different guidance with respect to these matters, we may be required to adjust our strategy accordingly. In addition, we may be limited in our ability to make certain investments and these limitations could require us to hold assets we might wish to sell or to sell assets we might wish to hold. To the extent that the SEC staff provides more specific guidance regarding any of the matters bearing upon the exemption we rely on from the 1940 Act, we may be required to adjust our strategy accordingly. Any additional guidance from the SEC staff could provide additional flexibility to us, or it could further inhibit our ability to pursue the strategies we have chosen.

The mortgage related investments that we acquire are limited by the provisions of the 1940 Act and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder. If the SEC determines that any of these securities are not qualifying interests in real estate or real estate-related assets, adopts a contrary interpretation with respect to these securities or otherwise believes we do not satisfy the above exceptions or changes its interpretation of the above exceptions, we could be required to restructure our activities or sell certain of our assets. We may be required at times to adopt less efficient methods of financing certain of our mortgage related investments and we may be precluded from acquiring certain types of higher yielding securities. The net effect of these factors would be to lower our net interest income. If we fail to qualify for an exemption from registration as an investment company or an exclusion from the definition of an investment company, our ability to use leverage would be substantially reduced. Further, if the SEC determined that we were an unregistered investment company, we could be subject to monetary penalties and injunctive relief in an action brought by the SEC, we would potentially be unable to enforce contracts with third parties which could seek to obtain rescission of transactions undertaken during the period for which it was established we were an unregistered investment company. If we were required to register as an investment company, it would result in a change of our financial statement requirements. Our business will be materially and adversely affected if we fail to qualify for this exemption from regulation pursuant to the 1940 Act. In addition, the loss of our 1940 Act exemption would also permit our Manager to terminate the Management Agreement, which could result in material adverse effect on our business and results of operations.

Compliance with our 1940 Act exemption will limit our ability to invest in certain of our target assets.

At times the Manager may be limited in allocating equity to target that do not qualify as real estate or real estate related assets for purposes of the 1940 Act exemption. This limitation could adversely affect the performance of our portfolio if these non qualifying assets presents more attractive investment opportunities. Among the current target assets that are not real estate assets are ABS, non pool Agency and Non-Agency MBS, GSE Risk Sharing Securities

and certain Commercial Mezzanine Loans.

The downgrade of the U.S. government's or certain European countries' credit ratings and any future downgrades of the U.S. government's or certain European countries' credit ratings may materially adversely affect our business, financial condition and results of operations.

On August 5, 2011, Standard & Poor's downgraded the U.S. government's credit rating for the first time in history. More recently, concerns over economic recession, geopolitical issues, the ability of certain European sovereigns to honor their debt obligations and the exposure of certain European financial institutions to such debt, potential deflationary pressures in Europe, slowing growth in China, rapid decline in the price of oil and certain other commodities, the availability and cost of financing, the mortgage market, uncertainty related to political events such as the government spending and tax policy and uncertain real estate market have contributed to volatility and relatively low expectations for the world economy and domestic and international markets. Europe remains vulnerable to volatile financial and credit markets due to economic and political uncertainties, including the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the European Union, the ongoing refugee crisis, financial uncertainty in Greece

and a lack of confidence in the European Union's banking system. Because FNMA and FHLMC are in conservatorship of the U.S. government, downgrades to the U.S. government's credit rating could impact the credit risk associated with Agency MBS and, therefore, decrease the value of the Agency MBS in which we invest. In addition, the downgrade of the U.S. government's credit rating and the credit ratings of certain European countries has created broader financial turmoil and uncertainty, which has recently weighed heavily on the global banking system. Therefore, the downgrade of the U.S. government's credit rating and the credit ratings of certain European countries and any future downgrades of the U.S. government's credit rating or the credit ratings of certain European countries may materially adversely affect our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Risks related to financing and hedging

Our strategy involves significant leverage, which may amplify losses.

Our current target leverage generally ranges between three to ten times the amount of our stockholders' equity (calculated in accordance with U.S. GAAP). We incur this leverage by borrowing against a substantial portion of the market value of our assets. By utilizing this leverage, we can enhance our returns. Nevertheless, this leverage, which is fundamental to our investment strategy, also creates significant risks.

As a result of our significant leverage, we may incur substantial losses if our borrowing costs increase. Our borrowing costs may increase for any of the following reasons:

- short-term interest rates increase;
- the market value of our securities decreases;
- interest rate volatility increases; or
- the availability of financing in the market decreases.

There can be no assurance that our Manager will be able to prevent mismatches in the maturities of our assets and liabilities.

Because we employ financial leverage in funding our portfolio, mismatches in the maturities of our assets and liabilities can create risk in the need to continually renew or otherwise refinance our liabilities. Our net interest margins are dependent upon a positive spread between the returns on our asset portfolio and our overall cost of funding. Our Manager actively employs portfolio-wide and security-specific risk measurement and management processes in our daily operations. Our Manager's risk management tools include software and services licensed or purchased from third parties, in addition to proprietary systems and analytical methods developed internally. There can be no assurance that these tools and the other risk management techniques described above will protect us from asset/liability risks.

We may be subject to margin calls under our master repurchase agreements, which could result in defaults or force us to sell assets under adverse market conditions or through foreclosure.

We have entered into master repurchase agreements with various financial institutions and borrow under these master repurchase agreements to finance the acquisition of assets for our investment portfolio. Pursuant to the terms of borrowings under our master repurchase agreements, a decline in the value of the subject assets may result in our lenders initiating margin calls. A margin call means that the lender requires us to pledge additional collateral to re-establish the ratio of the value of the collateral to the amount of the borrowing. The specific collateral value to borrowing ratio that would trigger a margin call is not set in the master repurchase agreements and will not be determined until we engage in a repurchase transaction under these agreements. Our fixed-rate securities generally are more susceptible to margin calls as increases in interest rates tend to have a greater negative affect on the market value of fixed-rate securities. If we are unable to satisfy margin calls, our lenders may foreclose on our collateral. The threat of or occurrence of a margin call could force us to sell our assets, either directly or through a foreclosure, under adverse market conditions. Because of the significant leverage we have, we may incur substantial losses upon the threat or occurrence of a margin call.

If a counterparty to our repurchase transactions defaults on its obligation to resell the underlying security back to us at the end of the transaction term, or if the value of the underlying security has declined as of the end of that term, or if we default on our obligations under the repurchase agreement, we will lose money on our repurchase transactions.

When we engage in repurchase transactions, we generally sell securities to lenders (repurchase agreement counterparties) and receive cash from these lenders. The lenders are obligated to resell the same securities back to us at the end of the term of the transaction. Because the cash we receive from the lender when we initially sell the securities to the lender will be less than the value of those securities (this difference is the haircut), if the lender defaults on its obligation to resell the same securities back to us we may incur a loss on the transaction equal to the amount of the haircut (assuming there was no change in the value of the

securities). We would also lose money on a repurchase transaction if the value of the underlying securities has declined as of the end of the transaction term, as we would have to repurchase the securities based on their initial value but would receive securities worth less than that amount. Further, if we default on one of our obligations under a repurchase transaction, the lender can terminate the transaction and cease entering into any other repurchase transactions with us. Our inability to post adequate collateral for a margin call by the counterparty, in a time frame as short as the close of the same business day, could result in a condition of default under our repurchase agreements, thereby enabling the counterparty to liquidate the collateral pledged by us, which may have a material adverse effect on our financial position, results of operations and cash flows. Certain of our repurchase agreements contain cross-default provisions, such that if a default occurs under an agreement with any specific lender, that lender could also declare a default under other repurchase agreements or other financing or derivative contracts, if any, with such lender. Further, 14 of the counterparties to our repurchase agreements held, as of December 31, 2017, collateral valued in excess of 5% of our stockholders' equity as security for our obligations under the applicable repurchase agreements. Any losses we incur on our repurchase transactions could adversely affect our earnings and thus our cash available for distribution to our stockholders.

If a counterparty to one of our swap agreements or TBAs defaults on its obligations, we may incur losses.

If a counterparty to one of the bilateral swap agreements that we enter into or TBAs that we enter into defaults on its obligations under the agreement, we may not receive payments due under the agreement, and thus, we may lose any unrealized gain associated with the agreement. In the case of a swap agreement, the fact that such swap agreement hedged a liability means that the liability could cease to be hedged upon the default of a counterparty. Additionally, we may also risk the loss of any collateral we have pledged to secure our obligations under a bilateral swap agreement if the counterparty, or in the case of a cleared swap, if our clearing broker, becomes insolvent or files for bankruptcy. Failure to procure adequate repurchase agreement financing, which generally have short terms, or to renew or replace repurchase agreement financing as it matures, would adversely affect our results of operations.

We use repurchase agreement financing as a strategy to increase the return on our investment portfolio. However, we may not be able to achieve our desired leverage ratio for a number of reasons, including if the following events occur:

- our lenders do not make repurchase agreement financing available to us at acceptable rates;
- certain of our lenders exit the repurchase market;
- our lenders require that we pledge additional collateral to cover our borrowings, which we may be unable to do; or
- we determine that the leverage would expose us to excessive risk.

We cannot assure you that any, or sufficient, repurchase agreement financing will be available to us on terms that are acceptable to us. In recent years, investors and financial institutions that lend in the securities repurchase market, have tightened lending standards in response to the difficulties and changed economic conditions that have materially adversely affected the MBS market. These market disruptions have been most pronounced in the Non-Agency MBS market, and the impact has also extended to Agency MBS, which has made the value of these assets unstable and relatively illiquid compared to prior periods. Any decline in their value, or perceived market uncertainty about their value, would make it more difficult for us to obtain financing on favorable terms or at all, or maintain our compliance with terms of any financing arrangements then in place.

As of December 31, 2017, we had amounts outstanding under repurchase agreements with 16 separate lenders and had repurchase agreements with 28 different lenders. Prior to entering into a lending relationship with any financial institution, our Manager does a thorough credit review of such potential lender. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a material adverse development involving one or more major financial institutions or the financial markets in general, in addition to the regulatory changes, could result in our lenders reducing our access to funds available under our repurchase agreements or terminating such agreements altogether.

Furthermore, because we rely primarily on short-term borrowings, our ability to achieve our investment objective will depend not only on our ability to borrow money in sufficient amounts and on favorable terms, but also on our ability to renew or replace on a continuous basis our maturing short-term borrowings. If we are not able to renew or replace maturing borrowings due to changes in the regulatory environment or for any other reason, we will have to sell some or all of our assets, possibly under adverse market conditions which may have a material adverse effect on our

financial position, results of operations and cash flows. In addition, the aforementioned changes to the regulatory capital requirements imposed on our lenders may significantly increase the cost of the financing that they provide to us. Our lenders also may revise their eligibility requirements for the types of assets they are willing to finance or the terms of such financings, based on, among other factors, the recent changes in the regulatory environment and their management of perceived risk, particularly with respect to assignee liability.

Our repurchase agreement financing may require us to provide additional collateral and may restrict us from leveraging our assets as fully as desired.

We use repurchase agreements to finance acquisitions of our investments. If the market value of the asset pledged or sold by us to a financing institution pursuant to a repurchase agreement declines, we may be required by the financing institution to provide additional collateral or pay down a portion of the funds advanced, but we may not have the funds available to do so, which could result in defaults. Posting additional collateral to support our credit will reduce our liquidity and limit our ability to leverage our assets, which could adversely affect our business. In the event we do not have sufficient liquidity to meet such requirements, financing institutions can accelerate repayment of our indebtedness, increase interest rates, liquidate our collateral or terminate our ability to borrow. Such a situation would likely result in a rapid deterioration of our financial condition and possibly necessitate a filing for bankruptcy protection.

On the date each month that principal payments are announced (i.e., the factor day for our Agency RMBS), the value of our Agency RMBS pledged as collateral under our repurchase agreements is reduced by the amount of the prepaid principal and, as a result, our lenders will typically initiate a margin call requiring the pledge of additional collateral or cash, in an amount equal to such prepaid principal, in order to re-establish the required ratio of borrowing to collateral value under such repurchase agreements. Accordingly, with respect to our Agency RMBS the announcement on factor day of principal prepayments is in advance of our receipt of the related scheduled payment, thereby creating a short-term receivable for us in the amount of such principal prepayments; however, under our repurchase agreements, we may receive a margin call relating to the related reduction in value of our Agency RMBS and prior to receipt of this short-term receivable, be required to post additional collateral or cash in an amount equal to the product of the advance rate of such repurchase agreement and the principal prepayment on or about factor day, which would reduce our liquidity during the period in which the short term receivable is outstanding. As a result, in order to meet any such margin calls, we could be forced to sell assets in order to maintain liquidity. Forced sales under adverse market conditions may result in lower sales prices than ordinary market sales in the normal course of business.

Further, financial institutions providing the repurchase facilities may require us to maintain a certain amount of cash uninvested or to set aside non-levered assets sufficient to maintain a specified liquidity position which would allow us to satisfy our collateral obligations. As a result, we may not be able to leverage our assets as fully as we would choose which could reduce our return on equity. If we are unable to meet these collateral obligations, our financial condition could deteriorate rapidly.

Lenders may require us to enter into restrictive covenants relating to our operations.

When we obtain further financing, lenders could impose restrictions on us that would affect our ability to incur additional debt, our capability to make distributions to stockholders and our flexibility to determine our operating policies. Loan documents we execute may contain negative covenants that limit, among other things, our ability to repurchase stock, distribute more than a certain amount of our funds from operations, and employ leverage beyond certain amounts.

Our rights under repurchase agreements may be subject to the effects of the bankruptcy laws in the event of the bankruptcy or insolvency of us or our counterparties under the repurchase agreements.

In the event of our insolvency or bankruptcy, certain repurchase agreements may qualify for special treatment under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code, the effect of which, among other things, would be to allow the lender under the applicable repurchase agreement to avoid the automatic stay provisions of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code and to take possession of and liquidate the assets that we have pledged under their repurchase agreements. In the event of the insolvency or bankruptcy of a lender during the term of a repurchase agreement, the lender may be permitted, under applicable insolvency laws, to repudiate the contract, and our claim against the lender for damages may be treated simply as the claim of an unsecured creditor. In addition, if the lender is a broker or dealer subject to the Securities Investor Protection Act of 1970, or an insured depository institution subject to the Federal Deposit Insurance Act, our ability to exercise our rights to recover our securities under a repurchase agreement or to be compensated for any damages resulting from the lender's insolvency may be further limited by those statutes. These claims would be subject to significant delay and, if and when received, may be substantially less than the damages we actually incur.

An increase in our borrowing costs relative to the interest that we receive on our portfolio investments may adversely affect our profitability and cash available for distribution to our stockholders.

As long as we earn a positive spread between interest and other income we earn on our leveraged assets and our borrowing costs, we believe that we can generally increase our profitability by using greater amounts of leverage. We cannot, however, assure you that repurchase financing will remain an efficient source of long-term financing for our assets. The amount of leverage that we use may be limited because our lenders might not make funding available to us or they may require that we provide additional collateral to secure our borrowings. If our financing strategy is not viable, we will have to find alternative forms of financing for our assets which may not be available to us on acceptable terms or at acceptable rates. In addition, in response to certain interest rate and investment environments or to changes in the market liquidity, we could adopt a strategy of reducing our leverage by selling assets or not reinvesting principal payments as MBS amortize and/or prepay, thereby decreasing the outstanding amount

of our related borrowings. Such an action could reduce interest income, interest expense and net income, the extent of which would be dependent on the level of reduction in assets and liabilities as well as the sale prices for which assets were sold.

As our financings mature, we will be required either to enter into new borrowings or to sell certain of our investments. Since we rely primarily on borrowings under repurchase agreements to finance our assets, our ability to achieve our investment objectives depends on our ability to borrow funds in sufficient amounts and on acceptable terms, and on our ability to renew or replace maturing borrowings on a continuous basis. Our repurchase agreement credit lines are renewable at the discretion of our lenders and, as such, do not contain guaranteed roll-over terms. Our ability to enter into repurchase transactions in the future will depend on the market value of our assets pledged to secure the specific borrowings, the availability of acceptable financing and market liquidity and other conditions existing in the lending market at that time. If we are unable to renew or replace maturing borrowings, we could be forced to sell assets in order to maintain liquidity. Forced sales under adverse market conditions could result in lower sales prices than ordinary market sales in the normal course of business. Further, an increase in short-term interest rates at the time that we seek to enter into new borrowings would reduce the spread between our returns on our assets and the cost of our borrowings. This would adversely affect our returns on our assets, which might reduce earnings and, in turn, cash available for distribution to our stockholders.

We may enter into hedging transactions that could expose us to contingent liabilities in the future.

Subject to maintaining our qualification as a REIT and exemption from registration under the 1940 Act, part of our investment strategy may involve entering into economic hedging transactions that could require us to fund cash payments in certain circumstances (such as the early termination of the hedging instrument caused by an event of default or other early termination event, or the decision by a counterparty to request margin securities it is contractually owed under the terms of the hedging instrument). The amount due would be equal to the unrealized loss of the open swap positions with the respective counterparty and could also include other fees and charges. These economic losses will be reflected in our results of operations, and our ability to fund these obligations will depend on the liquidity of our assets and access to capital at the time, and the need to fund these obligations could adversely impact our financial condition.

Hedging against interest rate exposure may adversely affect our earnings, which could reduce our cash available for distribution to our stockholders.

Subject to maintaining our qualification as a REIT and exemption from registration under the 1940 Act, we may pursue various economic hedging strategies to seek to reduce our exposure to adverse changes in interest rates. Our hedging activity varies in scope based on the level and volatility of interest rates, the type of assets held and other changing market conditions. Interest rate hedging may fail to protect or could adversely affect us because, among other things:

- interest rate hedging can be expensive, particularly during periods of rising and volatile interest rates;
- available interest rate hedges may not correspond directly with the interest rate risk for which protection is sought;
- due to a credit loss, the duration of the hedge may not match the duration of the related liability;
- the amount of income that a REIT may earn from hedging transactions (other than hedging transactions that satisfy certain requirements of the Code or that are done through a TRS) to offset interest rate losses is limited by U.S. federal tax provisions governing REITs;
- the value of derivatives used for hedging may be adjusted from time to time in accordance with accounting rules to reflect changes in fair value. Downward adjustments or "mark-to-market losses," would reduce our stockholders' equity;
- the credit quality of the hedging counterparty owing money on the hedge may be downgraded to such an extent that it impairs our ability to sell or assign our side of the hedging transaction; and
- the hedging counterparty owing money in the hedging transaction may default on its obligation to pay.

Our hedging transactions, which are intended to limit losses, may actually adversely affect our earnings, which could reduce our cash available for distribution to our stockholders.

While the majority of our interest rate swaps are traded on a regulated exchange, certain hedging instruments are traded over the counter and do not trade on regulated exchanges and, therefore, are not guaranteed by an exchange or a clearing house. In addition, over the counter instruments are more lightly regulated by U.S. and foreign governmental authorities. Consequently, there may be no requirements with respect to record keeping, financial responsibility or segregation of customer funds and positions. Furthermore, the enforceability of agreements underlying hedging transactions may depend on compliance with applicable statutory and commodity and other regulatory requirements and, depending on the identity of the counterparty, applicable international

requirements. The business failure of a hedging counterparty with whom we enter into a hedging transaction which did not clear through a clearing house would most likely result in its default. Default by a party with whom we enter into a hedging transaction may result in the loss of unrealized profits and force us to cover our commitments, if any, at the then current market price. Although generally we seek to reserve the right to terminate our hedging positions, it may not always be possible to dispose of or close out a hedging position without the consent of the hedging counterparty and we may not be able to enter into an offsetting contract in order to cover our risk. There can be no assurance that a liquid secondary market will exist for any hedging instruments purchased or sold, and we may be required to maintain a position until exercise or expiration, which could result in losses.

Risks associated with our relationship with our Manager

Our Board of Directors has approved very broad investment guidelines for our Manager and does not approve each investment and financing decision made by our Manager.

Our Manager is authorized to follow very broad investment guidelines. Our Board of Directors periodically reviews our investment guidelines and our investment portfolio but does not, and is not required to review all of our proposed investments, except that an investment in a security structured or issued by another entity managed by our Manager must be approved by at least two-thirds (2/3) of our independent directors prior to such investment. In addition, in conducting periodic reviews, our Board of Directors may rely primarily on information provided to them by our Manager. Furthermore, our Manager may use complex strategies, and transactions entered into by our Manager may be costly, difficult or impossible to unwind by the time they are reviewed by our Board of Directors. Our Manager has great latitude within the broad parameters of our investment guidelines in determining the types and amounts of Agency and Non-Agency RMBS, CMBS, ABS and other portfolio investments it may decide are attractive investments for us, which could result in investment returns that are substantially below expectations or that result in losses, which would materially and adversely affect our business operations and results. Further, decisions made and investments and financing arrangements entered into by our Manager may not fully reflect the best interests of our stockholders.

There are conflicts of interest in our relationship with our Manager that could result in decisions that are not in the best interests of our stockholders.

We are subject to conflicts of interest arising out of our relationship with our Manager. We do not have any employees. All of our executive officers and two of our directors, James W. Hirschmann III and Jennifer W. Murphy, are employees of our Manager. Our Management Agreement with our Manager was negotiated between related parties and its terms, including fees and other amounts payable, may not be as favorable to us as if it had been negotiated at arm's length with an unaffiliated third party. In addition, the obligations of our Manager and its officers and personnel to engage in other business activities may reduce the time our Manager and its officers and personnel spend managing us.

We compete for investment opportunities directly with other client portfolios managed by our Manager. Clients of our Manager have investment mandates and objectives that target the same assets as us. A substantial number of client accounts managed by our Manager have exposure to RMBS, CMBS and our other portfolio investments and may have similar investment mandates and objectives. While our Manager has only a limited number of client accounts investing in Whole-Loans, the supply of Whole-Loan investments meeting the Manager's investment criteria are extremely limited. In addition, our Manager may have additional clients that compete directly with us for investment opportunities in the future. Our Manager has an investment allocation policy in place that is intended to ensure that no single client is intentionally favored over another and that trades are allocated in a fair and equitable manner. We may compete with our Manager or its other clients for investment or financing opportunities sourced by our Manager; however, we may either not be presented with the opportunity or have to compete with our Manager to acquire these investments or have access to these sources of financing. Our Manager and our executive officers may choose to allocate favorable investments to itself or to its or other clients instead of to us. Further, at times when there are turbulent conditions in the mortgage markets or distress in the credit markets or other times when we will need focused support and assistance from our Manager, our Manager's other clients will likewise require greater focus and

attention, placing our Manager's resources in high demand. In such situations, we may not receive the level of support and assistance that we may receive if we were internally managed or if our Manager did not act as a manager for other entities. There is no assurance that our Manager's allocation policies that address some of the conflicts relating to our access to investment and financing sources will be adequate to address all of the conflicts that may arise.

We pay our Manager a management fee that is not tied to our performance. The management fee may not sufficiently incentivize our Manager to generate attractive risk-adjusted returns for us. This could hurt both our ability to make distributions to our stockholders and the market price of our common stock. Furthermore, the compensation payable to our Manager will increase as a result of future issuances of our equity securities, even if the issuances are dilutive to existing stockholders.

As of December 31, 2017, our Manager owned 1,314,838 shares of our common stock. To the extent our Manager elects to sell all or a portion of these shares in the future, our Manager's interests may be less aligned with our interests.

We are dependent on our Manager and its key personnel for our success.

We have no separate facilities and are completely reliant on our Manager. All of our executive officers and two of our directors, are employees of our Manager. Our Manager has significant discretion as to the implementation of our investment and operating policies and strategies. Accordingly, we believe that our success will depend to a significant extent upon the efforts, experience, diligence, skill and network of business contacts of the executive officers and key personnel of our Manager. The executive officers and key personnel of our Manager evaluate, negotiate, close and monitor our investments; therefore, our success depends on their continued service. The departure of any of the executive officers or key personnel of our Manager could have a material adverse effect on our performance. In addition, we offer no assurance that our Manager will remain our investment manager or that we will continue to have access to our Manager's principals and professionals. The term of our Management Agreement with our Manager expires on May 16, 2019, with automatic one-year renewals thereafter. If the Management Agreement is terminated and no suitable replacement is found to manage us, we may not be able to execute our business plan. Moreover, our Manager is not obligated to dedicate any of its personnel exclusively to us nor is it obligated to dedicate any specific portion of its time to our business, and none of our Manager's personnel are contractually dedicated to us under our Management Agreement with our Manager.

The Management Agreement with our Manager was not negotiated on an arm's-length basis, may not be as favorable to us as if it had been negotiated with an unaffiliated third party and may be costly and difficult to terminate.

All of our executive officers and two of our directors are employees of our Manager. Our Management Agreement with our Manager was negotiated between related parties and its terms, including fees payable, may not be as favorable to us as if it had been negotiated with an unaffiliated third party.

Termination of the Management Agreement with our Manager without cause is difficult and costly. Our independent directors review our Manager's performance and any fees payable to our Manager annually and the Management Agreement may be terminated annually upon the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of our independent directors based upon: (i) our Manager's unsatisfactory performance that is materially detrimental to us; or (ii) our determination that any fees payable to our Manager are not fair, subject to our Manager's right to prevent termination based on unfair fees by accepting a reduction of management fees agreed to by at least two-thirds (2/3) of our independent directors. We are required to provide our Manager 180 days prior notice of any such termination. Unless terminated for cause, we are required to pay our Manager a termination fee equal to three times the average annual management fee earned by our Manager during the prior 24-month period immediately preceding such termination, calculated as of the end of the most recently completed fiscal quarter before the date of termination. This provision increases the effective cost to us of electing not to renew, or defaulting in our obligations under, the Management Agreement, thereby adversely affecting our inclination to end our relationship with our Manager, even if we believe our Manager's performance is not satisfactory.

Our Manager is only contractually committed to serve us until May 16, 2019. The Management Agreement is automatically renewable for one-year terms; provided, however, that our Manager may terminate the Management Agreement annually upon 180 days prior notice. If the Management Agreement is terminated and no suitable replacement is found to manage us, we may not be able to execute our business plan.

Pursuant to the Management Agreement, our Manager does not assume any responsibility other than to render the services called for thereunder and is not responsible for any action of our Board of Directors in following or declining to follow its advice or recommendations. Our Manager maintains a contractual as opposed to a fiduciary relationship with us. Under the terms of the Management Agreement, our Manager, its officers, stockholders, members, managers, directors, personnel, any person controlling or controlled by our Manager and any person providing sub-advisory services to our Manager are not liable to us, our directors, our stockholders or any partners for acts or omissions performed in accordance with and pursuant to the Management Agreement, except because of acts constituting bad faith, willful misconduct, gross negligence, or reckless disregard of their duties under the Management Agreement. In

addition, we indemnify our Manager, its officers, stockholders, members, managers, directors, personnel, any person controlling or controlled by our Manager and any person providing sub-advisory services to our Manager with respect to all expenses, losses, damages, liabilities, demands, charges and claims arising from acts of our Manager not constituting bad faith, willful misconduct, gross negligence, or reckless disregard of duties, performed in good faith in accordance with and pursuant to the Management Agreement.

Our Manager's management fee is payable regardless of our performance.

We pay our Manager a management fee regardless of the performance of our portfolio. Our Manager's entitlement to non-performance-based compensation might reduce its incentive to devote its time and effort to seeking assets that provide attractive

risk-adjusted returns for our portfolio. This in turn could hurt both our ability to make distributions to our stockholders and the market price of our common stock.

Our Manager is subject to extensive regulation as an investment advisor, which could adversely affect its ability to manage our business.

Our Manager is subject to regulation as an investment advisor by various regulatory authorities that are charged with protecting the interests of its clients, including us. Instances of criminal activity and fraud by participants in the investment management industry and disclosures of trading and other abuses by participants in the financial services industry have led the U.S. government and regulators to the rules and regulations governing, and oversight of, the U.S. financial system, including the investment management industry and more aggressive enforcement of the existing laws and regulations. Our Manager could be subject to civil liability, criminal liability, or sanction, including revocation of its registration as an investment adviser, revocation of the licenses of its employees, censures, fines, or temporary suspension or permanent bar from conducting business, if it is found to have violated any of these laws or regulations. Any such liability or sanction could adversely affect its ability to manage our business. Our Manager must continually address conflicts between its interests and those of its clients, including us. In addition, the SEC and other regulators have increased their scrutiny of potential conflicts of interest. We believe our Manager has procedures and controls that are reasonably designed to address these issues. However, appropriately dealing with conflicts of interest is complex and difficult and if our Manager fails, or appears to fail, to deal appropriately with conflicts of interest, it could face litigation or regulatory proceedings or penalties, any of which could adversely affect its ability to manage our business.

In fact, in January 2014 settlements of two separate and unrelated regulatory matters involving our Manager with the United States Department of Labor and the Securities and Exchange Commission were announced. The first matter involved the trading of Non-Agency RMBS and whether certain trades complied with the cross trading rules applicable to pension plans subject to Employee Retirement Income Security Act ("ERISA") and to SEC registered funds under the 1940 Act. Our Manager settled that matter without admitting or denying the charges and paying approximately \$7.4 million in compensation to clients and approximately \$1.6 million in fines to the regulators. The second matter involved the handling of an investment which prohibited ERISA accounts from holding it which was allocated in error to certain ERISA accounts. Our Manager settled that matter without admitting or denying the charges and paying \$10 million in compensation and \$2 million in fines. Neither matter related to the Company. The settlements will not adversely affect our Manager's ability to manage the Company's affairs.

Risks related to our common stock

The market price and trading volume of our common stock may vary substantially.

Our common stock is listed on the NYSE under the symbol "WMC". The stock markets, including the NYSE, have experienced significant price and volume fluctuations over the past several years. As a result, the market price of our common stock is likely to be similarly volatile, and investors in our common stock may experience a decrease in the value of their shares. Accordingly, no assurance can be given as to the ability of our stockholders to sell their common stock or the price that our stockholders may obtain for their common stock.

Some of the factors that could negatively affect the market price of our common stock include:

- actual or anticipated variations in our quarterly operating results;
- changes in our earnings estimates or publication of research reports about us or the real estate industry;
- changes in market valuations of similar companies;
- adverse market reaction to any increased indebtedness we incur in the future;
- additions to or departures of our Manager's key personnel;
- actions by our stockholders;
- changes in our dividend policy or payments; and
- speculation in the press or investment community.

Market factors unrelated to our performance could also negatively impact the market price of our common stock. One of the factors that investors may consider in deciding whether to buy or sell our common stock is our distribution rate as a percentage of our stock price relative to market interest rates. If market interest rates increase, prospective

investors may seek alternative investments paying higher dividends or interest. As a result, interest rate fluctuations and conditions in the capital markets can

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affect the market value of our common stock. For instance, if interest rates rise, it is likely that the market price of our common stock will decrease as market rates on interest-bearing securities increase.

Investing in our common stock may involve a high degree of risk.

The investments that we make in accordance with our investment objectives may result in a high amount of risk when compared to alternative investment options and volatility or loss of principal. Our investments may be highly speculative and aggressive, and therefore an investment in our common stock may not be suitable for someone with lower risk tolerance.

Common stock eligible for future sale may have adverse effects on our share price.

We cannot predict the effect, if any, of future sales of our common stock, or the availability of shares for future sales, on the market price of our common stock. The market price of our common stock may decline significantly when the restrictions on resale (or lock up agreements), which may attach to future sales of our common stock, by certain of our stockholders lapse. Sales of substantial amounts of common stock or the perception that such sales could occur may adversely affect the prevailing market price for our common stock.

Also, we may issue additional shares in follow-on public offerings or private placements to make new investments or for other purposes. We are not required to offer any such shares to existing stockholders on a preemptive basis.

Therefore, it may not be possible for existing stockholders to participate in such future share issuances, which may dilute the existing stockholders' interests in us.

We have not established a minimum distribution payment level and we cannot assure you of our ability to pay distributions in the future.

We intend to pay quarterly distributions and to make distributions to our stockholders in an amount such that we distribute all or substantially all of our net taxable income, calculated in accordance with the REIT regulations, each year. We have not established a minimum distribution payment level and our ability to pay distributions may be adversely affected by a number of factors, including the risk factors described herein. All distributions will be made at the discretion of our Board of Directors and will depend on our earnings, our financial condition, debt covenants, maintenance of our REIT qualification and other factors as our Board of Directors may deem relevant from time to time. We believe that a change in any one of the following factors could adversely affect our results of operations and impair our ability to pay distributions to our stockholders:

- the profitability of our existing investments and the investment of net proceeds of any subsequent offering;

- our ability to make profitable investments;

- margin calls or other expenses that reduce our cash flow;

- decreases in the value of our portfolio or defaults in our asset portfolio; and

- the fact that anticipated operating expense levels may not prove accurate, as actual results may vary from estimates.

We cannot assure you that we will achieve investment results that will allow us to make a specified level of cash distributions or year-to-year increases in cash distributions in the future. In addition, some of our distributions may include a return in capital.

Future offerings of debt or equity securities, which would rank senior to our common stock, may adversely affect the market price of our common stock.

If we decide to issue debt or equity securities in the future, which would rank senior to our common stock, it is likely that they will be governed by an indenture or other instrument containing covenants restricting our operating flexibility. Additionally, any convertible or exchangeable securities that we issue in the future may have rights, preferences and privileges more favorable than those of our common stock and may result in dilution to owners of our common stock. We and, indirectly, our stockholders, will bear the cost of issuing and servicing such securities.

Because our decision to issue debt or equity securities in any future offering will depend on market conditions and other factors beyond our control, we cannot predict or estimate the amount, timing or nature of our future offerings.

Thus holders of our common stock will bear the risk of our future offerings reducing the market price of our common stock and diluting the value of their stock holdings in us. Furthermore, the compensation payable to our Manager will increase as a result of future issuances of our equity securities, including issuances upon exercise of the warrants, described below, even if the issuances are dilutive to existing stockholders.

The dilutive effect of our outstanding warrants, including in certain circumstances, upon the future issuance of common stock, could have an adverse effect on the future market price of our common stock or otherwise adversely affect the interests of our common stockholders.

On May 15, 2012, we issued and sold to certain institutional investors a number of warrants, which expire on May 15, 2019, entitling them to purchase up to an aggregate of 1,115,893 shares of our common stock. These warrants had an initial exercise price of \$20.50 per share (subject to adjustment and limitation on exercise in certain circumstances) and are exercisable for seven years after the date of the warrants' issuance, or earlier upon notice of redemption by us. As a result of two follow on public offerings on October 3, 2012 and April 3, 2014 and the stock portion of our dividend declared on December 19, 2013 the exercise price of each of the outstanding warrants has been reduced to \$16.70 and the number of shares purchasable has increased to 1,232,916. The exercise of the warrants in the future would be dilutive to holders of our common stock if our book value per share or the market price of our common stock is higher than the exercise price at the time of exercise. The potential for dilution from the warrants could have an adverse effect on the future market price of our common stock.

Further, the exercise price of the warrants will be adjusted under certain circumstances, including, subject to certain exceptions, if we sell common stock (or other securities convertible into or exchangeable for our common stock) in a public offering or private placement, for cash at a price per share (after deduction of underwriting discounts or placement fees and other expenses incurred by us that are attributable to the offering) that is less than the closing price of our common stock immediately prior to: (i) the announcement of the proposed sale in the case of public offerings; or (ii) the execution of the purchase agreement in the case of private placements. Accordingly, the exercise price will be adjusted downward in connection with any future offering, which would increase the dilutive effect of the warrants. Furthermore, any similar public offerings or private placements of our common stock we conduct in the future will likely increase the dilutive effect of the warrants.

Conversion of the notes may dilute the ownership interest of existing shareholders, including holders who had previously converted their notes.

In October 2017, the Company issued \$115.0 million aggregate principal amount of 6.75% convertible senior unsecured notes, which included the underwriter's option to purchase \$15.0 million aggregate principal amount of the notes for net proceeds of \$111.1 million. The notes mature on October 1, 2022, unless earlier converted, redeemed or repurchased by the holders pursuant to their terms, and are not redeemable by the Company except during the final three months prior to maturity.

The notes are convertible into, at the Company's election, cash, shares of the Company's common stock or a combination of both, subject to the satisfaction of certain conditions and during specified periods. The conversion rate is subject to adjustment upon the occurrence of certain specified events and the holders may require the Company to repurchase all or any portion of their notes for cash equal to 100% of the principal amount of the notes, plus accrued and unpaid interest, if the Company undergoes a fundamental change as specified in the agreement. The initial conversion rate was 83.1947 shares of common stock per \$1,000 principal amount of notes and represented a conversion price of \$12.02 per share of common stock.

To the extent we issue shares of our common stock upon conversion of the notes, the conversion of some or all of our notes will dilute the ownership interests of existing shareholders. Any sales in the public market of shares of our common stock issuable upon such conversion of the notes could adversely affect the prevailing market price.

Risks related to our organization and structure

Our authorized but unissued shares of common and preferred stock may prevent a change in our control.

Our amended and restated certificate of incorporation authorizes us to issue additional authorized but unissued shares of common or preferred stock. In addition, our Board of Directors may, without stockholder approval, amend our amended and restated certificate of incorporation to increase the aggregate number of our shares of stock or the number of shares of stock of any class or series that we have authority to issue and classify or reclassify any unissued

shares of common or preferred stock and set the preferences, rights and other terms of the classified or reclassified shares. As a result, our Board of Directors may establish a series of shares of common or preferred stock that could delay or prevent a transaction or a change in control that might involve a premium price for our shares of common stock or otherwise be in the best interest of our stockholders.

Ownership limitations may restrict change of control or business combination opportunities in which our stockholders might receive a premium for their shares.

In order for us to qualify as a REIT for each taxable year after 2012, no more than 50% in value of our outstanding capital stock may be owned, directly or indirectly, by five or fewer individuals during the last half of any calendar year. "Individuals" for

this purpose include natural persons, private foundations, some employee benefit plans and trusts, and some charitable trusts. To assist us in maintaining our qualification as a REIT, our amended and restated certificate of incorporation generally prohibits any person from directly or indirectly owning more than 9.8% in value or in number of shares, whichever is more restrictive, of the outstanding shares of our capital stock or more than 9.8% in value or in number of shares, whichever is more restrictive, of the outstanding shares of our common stock. This ownership limitation could have the effect of discouraging a takeover or other transaction in which holders of our common stock might receive a premium for their shares over the then prevailing market price or which holders might believe to be otherwise in their best interests.

Provisions in our amended and restated certificate of incorporation, our amended and restated bylaws and Delaware law may have the effect of preventing or hindering a change in control and adversely affecting the market price of our common stock.

Provisions in our amended and restated certificate of incorporation and our amended and restated bylaws and applicable provisions of the Delaware General Corporation Law may make it more difficult and expensive for a third party to acquire control of us even if a change of control would be beneficial to the interests of our stockholders. These provisions could discourage potential takeover attempts and could adversely affect the market price our common stock.

We may pay distributions from offering proceeds, borrowings or the sale of assets to the extent that distributions exceed earnings or cash flow from our operations.

We may pay distributions from offering proceeds, borrowings or the sale of assets to the extent that distributions exceed earnings or cash flow from our operations. Such distributions would reduce the amount of cash we have available for investing and other purposes and could be dilutive to our financial results. In addition, funding our distributions from our net proceeds may constitute a return of capital to our investors, which would have the effect of reducing each stockholder's basis in its shares of common stock.

Risks Related to REIT Status

If we do not qualify as a REIT or fail to remain qualified as a REIT, we will be subject to U.S. federal income tax as a regular corporation and could face a substantial tax liability, which would reduce the amount of cash available for distribution to our stockholders.

We believe we have operated and intend to continue to operate in a manner that allows us to qualify as a REIT. Our ability to satisfy the asset tests depends upon our analysis of the characterization and fair market values of our assets, some of which are not susceptible to a precise determination, and for which we will not obtain independent appraisals. Our compliance with the annual REIT income and quarterly asset requirements also depends upon our ability to successfully manage the composition of our income and assets on an ongoing basis. Accordingly, there can be no assurance that the IRS will not contend that our interests in the subsidiary or in securities of other issuers will not cause a violation of the REIT requirements.

If we were to fail to qualify as a REIT in any taxable year, and we do not qualify for certain statutory relief provisions, we would be subject to U.S. federal income tax, including any applicable alternative minimum tax, on our taxable income at regular corporate rates, and dividends paid to our stockholders would not be deductible by us in computing our taxable income. Any resulting corporate tax liability could be substantial and would reduce the amount of cash available for distribution to our stockholders, which in turn could have an adverse impact on the value of our common stock. Unless we were entitled to relief under certain Code provisions, we also would be disqualified from taxation as a REIT for the four taxable years following the year in which we failed to qualify as a REIT.

Dividends payable by REITs do not qualify for the reduced tax rates available for some dividends.

The maximum tax rate applicable to income from "qualified dividends" payable to U.S. stockholders that are individuals, trusts and estates is currently 20%, exclusive of the 3.8% investment tax surcharge, resulting from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, which was signed into law on December 22, 2017, thereby making significant changes to the Internal Revenue Code. Dividends payable by REITs, however, generally are not eligible for the qualified dividend reduced rates. For taxable years beginning after December 31, 2017 and before January 1, 2026, generally stockholders that are individuals, trusts or estates may deduct 20% of the aggregate amount of ordinary dividends

distributed by us, subject to certain limitations. While the qualified dividend rules do not adversely affect the taxation of REITs or dividends payable by REITs, the more favorable rates applicable to regular corporate qualified dividends could cause investors who are individuals, trusts and estates to perceive investments in REITs to be relatively less attractive than investments in the stocks of non-REIT corporations that pay dividends, which could adversely affect the value of the stock of REITs, including our common stock.

REIT distribution requirements could adversely affect our ability to execute our business plan.

We generally must distribute annually at least 90% of our net taxable income, determined without regard to the dividends paid deduction and excluding net capital gains, in order for U.S. federal corporate income tax not to apply to earnings that we distribute. To the extent that we satisfy this distribution requirement, but distribute less than 100% of our REIT taxable income, we will be subject to U.S. federal corporate income tax on our undistributed REIT taxable income. In addition, we will be subject to a nondeductible 4% excise tax if the actual amount that we pay out to our stockholders in a calendar year is less than a minimum amount specified under U.S. federal tax laws. We intend to continue to make distributions to our stockholders to comply with the REIT requirements of the Code.

From time to time, we may generate taxable income greater than our income for financial reporting purposes prepared in accordance with U.S. GAAP, or differences in timing between the recognition of taxable income and the actual receipt of cash may occur. For example, the tax code limits our ability to use capital losses to offset ordinary income, thereby requiring us to distribute such ordinary income. If we do not have other funds available in these situations we could be required to borrow funds on unfavorable terms, sell investments at disadvantageous prices or distribute amounts that would otherwise be invested in future acquisitions to make distributions sufficient to enable us to pay out enough of our taxable income to satisfy the REIT distribution requirement and to avoid corporate income tax and the nondeductible 4% excise tax in a particular year. These alternatives could increase our costs or reduce our equity.

Thus, compliance with the REIT requirements may hinder our ability to grow, which could adversely affect the value of our common stock.

Even if we remain qualified as a REIT, we may face other tax liabilities that reduce our cash flow.

Even if we remain qualified for taxation as a REIT, we may be subject to certain U.S. federal, state and local taxes on our income and assets, including taxes on any undistributed income, tax on income from some activities conducted as a result of a foreclosure, excise taxes, state or local income, property and transfer taxes, such as mortgage recording taxes, and other taxes. In addition, in order to meet the REIT qualification requirements, prevent the recognition of certain types of non-cash income, or to avert the imposition of a 100% tax that applies to certain gains derived by a REIT from dealer property or inventory, we hold some of our assets through a TRS or other consolidated entities that will be subject to corporate-level income tax at regular corporate rates. The payment of any of these taxes would decrease cash available for distribution to our stockholders.

Complying with REIT requirements may cause us to liquidate or forgo otherwise attractive opportunities.

To qualify as a REIT, we must ensure that at the end of each calendar quarter, at least 75% of the value of our assets consists of cash, cash items, government securities and qualified real estate assets, including certain mortgage loans and securities. The remainder of our investments in securities (other than government securities and qualified real estate assets) generally cannot include more than 10% of the outstanding voting securities of any one issuer or more than 10% of the total value of the outstanding securities of any one issuer. In addition, in general, no more than 5% of the value of our total assets (other than government securities and qualified real estate assets) can consist of the securities of any one issuer, and no more than 20% of the value of our total assets can be represented by securities of one or more TRS. If we fail to comply with these requirements at the end of any calendar quarter, we must correct the failure within 30 days after the end of the calendar quarter or qualify for certain statutory relief provisions to avoid losing our REIT qualification and suffering adverse tax consequences. As a result, we may be required to liquidate otherwise attractive investments from our investment portfolio. These actions could have the effect of reducing our income and amounts available for distribution to our stockholders.

In addition to the asset tests set forth above, to qualify as a REIT we must continually satisfy tests concerning, among other things, the sources of our income, the nature and diversification of our assets, the amounts we distribute to our stockholders and the ownership of our stock. We may be required to make distributions to stockholders at disadvantageous times or when we do not have funds readily available for distribution and may be unable to pursue investments that would be otherwise advantageous to us in order to satisfy the source-of-income or asset-diversification requirements for qualifying as a REIT. Thus, compliance with the REIT requirements may hinder our ability to make and, in certain cases, to maintain ownership of, certain attractive investments.

We may be required to report taxable income for certain investments in excess of the economic income we ultimately realize from them.

We have acquired and may acquire in the future mortgage-backed securities and other portfolio instruments in the secondary market for less than their face amount. In addition, pursuant to our ownership of certain mortgage-backed securities, we may be treated as holding certain debt instruments acquired in the secondary market for less than their face amount. The discount at which such securities or debt instruments are acquired may reflect doubts about their ultimate collectability rather than current market interest rates. The amount of such discount will nevertheless generally be treated as "market discount" for U.S. federal income tax purposes. Under general tax rules, accrued market discount is reported as income when, and to the extent that, any payment of principal of the mortgage-backed security or debt instrument is made. If we collect less on the mortgage-backed security or

debt instrument than our purchase price plus the market discount we had previously reported as income, we may not be able to benefit from any offsetting capital loss deductions to the extent we do not have offsetting capital gains. In addition, pursuant to our ownership of certain mortgage-backed securities or debt instruments, we may be treated as holding distressed debt investments that are subsequently modified by agreement with the borrower. If the amendments to the outstanding debt are "significant modifications" under applicable Treasury regulations, the modified debt may be considered to have been reissued to us at a gain in a debt-for-debt exchange with the borrower. In that event, we may be required to recognize taxable gain to the extent the principal amount of the modified debt exceeds our adjusted tax basis in the unmodified debt, even if the value of the debt or the payment expectations have not changed.

Moreover, some of the mortgage-backed securities or debt instruments that we acquire may have been issued with original issue discount. Under general tax rules, we are required to report such original issue discount based on a constant yield method and will be taxed based on the assumption that all future projected payments due on such mortgage-backed securities will be made. If such mortgage-backed securities turn out not to be fully collectable, an offsetting loss deduction will become available only in the later year that uncollectability is provable.

Under the recently enacted Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (the "Act"), we generally will be required to take certain amounts in income no later than the time such amounts are reflected on certain financial statements. The application of this rule may require the accrual of income with respect to certain of debt instruments or mortgage-backed securities, such as original issue discount or market discount, earlier than would be the case under the general tax rules, although the precise application of this rule is unclear at this time. This rule generally will be effective for tax years beginning after December 31, 2017 or, for debt instruments or mortgage-backed securities issued with original issue discount, for tax years beginning after December 31, 2018.

Finally, in the event that mortgage-backed securities or any debt instruments we are treated as holding pursuant to our investments in mortgage-backed securities are delinquent as to mandatory principal and interest payments, we may nonetheless be required to continue to recognize the unpaid interest as taxable income as it accrues, despite doubt as to its ultimate collectability. Similarly, we may be required to accrue interest income with respect to subordinate mortgage-backed securities at the stated rate regardless of whether corresponding cash payments are received or are ultimately collectable. In each case, while we would in general ultimately have an offsetting loss deduction available to us when such interest was determined to be uncollectable, the utility of that deduction could depend on our having taxable income in that later year or thereafter.

Certain apportionment rules may affect our ability to comply with the REIT asset and gross income tests.

The Code provides that a regular or a residual interest in a real estate mortgage investment conduit, or REMIC, is generally treated as a real estate asset for the purpose of the REIT asset tests, and any amount includible in our gross income with respect to such an interest is generally treated as interest on an obligation secured by a mortgage on real property for the purpose of the REIT gross income tests. If, however, less than 95% of the assets of a REMIC in which we hold an interest consist of real estate assets (determined as if we held such assets), we will be treated as holding our proportionate share of the assets of the REMIC for the purpose of the REIT asset tests and receiving directly our proportionate share of the income of the REMIC for the purpose of determining the amount of income from the REMIC that is treated as interest on an obligation secured by a mortgage on real property. In connection with the expanded Agency RMBS-backed HARP loan program in which we may invest, the IRS issued guidance providing that, among other things, if a REIT holds a regular interest in an "eligible REMIC," or a residual interest in an "eligible REMIC" that informs the REIT that at least 80% of the REMIC's assets constitute real estate assets, then the REIT may treat 80% of the interest in the REMIC as a real estate asset for the purpose of the REIT income and asset tests. Although the portion of the income from such a REMIC interest that does not qualify for purposes of the REIT 75% gross income test would likely be qualifying income for the purpose of the 95% REIT gross income test, the remaining 20% of the REMIC interest generally would not qualify as a real estate asset, which could adversely affect our ability to satisfy the REIT asset tests. Accordingly, owning such a REMIC interest could adversely affect our ability to qualify as a REIT.

The "taxable mortgage pool" rules may increase the taxes that we or our stockholders may incur, and may limit the manner in which we effect future securitizations.

Securitizations could result in the creation of taxable mortgage pools for U.S. federal income tax purposes. As a REIT, so long as we own 100% of the equity interests in a taxable mortgage pool, we generally would not be adversely affected by the characterization of the securitization as a taxable mortgage pool. Certain categories of stockholders, however, such as foreign stockholders eligible for treaty or other benefits, stockholders with net operating losses, and certain tax-exempt stockholders that are subject to unrelated business income tax, could be subject to increased taxes on a portion of their dividend income from us that is attributable to the taxable mortgage pool. In addition, to the extent that our stock is owned by tax-exempt "disqualified organizations," such as certain government-related entities and charitable remainder trusts that are not subject to tax on unrelated business income, we may incur a corporate level tax on a portion of our income from the taxable mortgage pool. In that case, we may reduce the amount of our distributions to any disqualified organization whose stock ownership gave rise to the tax. Moreover,

we would be precluded from selling equity interests in these securitizations to outside investors, or selling any debt securities issued in connection with these securitizations that might be considered to be equity interests for tax purposes. These limitations may prevent us from using certain techniques to maximize our returns from securitization transactions.

Our ability to invest in and dispose of "to be announced" securities could be limited by our election to be subject to tax as a REIT.

We may purchase Agency RMBS through "to-be-announced" forward contracts, or TBAs. In certain instances, rather than take delivery of the Agency RMBS subject to a TBA, we may dispose of the TBA through a dollar roll transaction in which we agree to purchase similar securities in the future at a predetermined price or otherwise, which may result in the recognition of income or gains. We account for dollar roll transactions as purchases and sales of securities. The law is unclear regarding whether TBAs will be qualifying assets for the 75% asset test and whether income and gains from dispositions of TBAs will be qualifying income for the 75% gross income test. Accordingly, our ability to purchase Agency RMBS through TBAs and to dispose of TBAs, through dollar roll transactions or otherwise, could be limited.

The failure of securities subject to repurchase agreements to qualify as real estate assets could adversely affect our ability to qualify as a REIT.

We enter into financing arrangements that are structured as sale and repurchase agreements pursuant to which we nominally sell certain of our securities to a counterparty and simultaneously enter into an agreement to repurchase these securities at a later date in exchange for a purchase price. Economically, these agreements are financings which are secured by the securities sold pursuant thereto. We believe that we will be treated for REIT asset and income test purposes as the owner of the securities that are the subject of any such sale and repurchase agreement notwithstanding that such agreement may transfer record ownership of the securities to the counterparty during the term of the agreement. It is possible, however, that the IRS could assert that we did not own the securities during the term of the sale and repurchase agreement, in which case we could fail to qualify as a REIT.

Liquidation of assets may jeopardize our REIT qualification or create additional tax liability for us.

To qualify as a REIT, we must comply with requirements regarding the composition of our assets and our sources of income. If we are compelled to liquidate our investments to repay obligations to our lenders, we may be unable to comply with these requirements, ultimately jeopardizing our qualification as a REIT, or we may be subject to a 100% tax on any resultant gain if we sell assets that are treated as dealer property or inventory.

Complying with REIT requirements may limit our ability to hedge effectively and may cause us to incur tax liabilities. The REIT provisions of the Code substantially limit our ability to hedge our assets and liabilities. Any income from a hedging transaction we enter into to manage risk of interest rate changes with respect to borrowings made or to be made to acquire or carry real estate assets does not constitute "gross income" for purposes of the 75% or 95% gross income tests. To the extent that we enter into other types of hedging transactions, the income from those transactions is likely to be treated as non-qualifying income for purposes of both of the gross income tests. As a result of these rules, we limit our use of advantageous hedging techniques, and we may implement those hedges through a domestic TRS. This could increase the cost of our hedging activities because our TRS would be subject to tax on gains or expose us to greater risks associated with changes in interest rates than we would otherwise want to bear. In addition, losses in our TRS will generally not provide any tax benefit, except for being carried forward against future taxable income in the TRS.

Qualifying as a REIT involves highly technical and complex provisions of the Code.

Qualification as a REIT involves the application of highly technical and complex Code provisions for which only limited judicial and administrative authorities exist. Even a technical or inadvertent violation could jeopardize our REIT qualification. Our qualification as a REIT will depend on our satisfaction of certain asset, income, organizational, distribution, stockholder ownership and other requirements on a continuing basis. In addition, our ability to satisfy the requirements to qualify as a REIT depends in part on the actions of third parties over which we have no control or only limited influence, including in cases where we own an equity interest in an entity that is classified as a partnership for U.S. federal income tax purposes.

Changes to U.S. federal income tax laws could materially and adversely affect us and our stockholders. The recently enacted Tax Cuts and Jobs Act makes substantial changes to the Code. Among those changes are a significant permanent reduction in the generally applicable corporate tax rate, changes in the taxation of individuals and other non-corporate taxpayers that generally but not universally reduce their taxes on a temporary basis subject to “sunset” provisions, the elimination or modification of various currently allowed deductions (including substantial limitations on the deductibility of interest and, in the case of individuals, the deduction for personal state and local taxes), certain additional limitations on the deduction of net operating losses, and preferential rates of taxation on most ordinary REIT dividends and certain business income derived by non-corporate taxpayers in comparison to other ordinary income recognized by such taxpayers. The effect of these, and the many other,

changes made in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is highly uncertain, both in terms of their direct effect on the taxation of an investment in our common stock and their indirect effect on the value of our assets or market conditions generally. Furthermore, many of the provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will require guidance through the issuance of Treasury regulations in order to assess their effect. There may be a substantial delay before such regulations are promulgated, increasing the uncertainty as to the ultimate effect of the statutory amendments on us. It is also likely that there will be technical corrections legislation proposed with respect to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act this year, the effect of which cannot be predicted and may be adverse to us or our stockholders.

Item 1B. Unresolved Staff Comment

None

Item 2. Properties

We do not own any properties. Our executive and administrative offices are located in Pasadena, California in office space shared with our Manager.

Item 3. Legal Proceedings

None.

Item 4. Mine Safety Disclosures.

Not applicable.

PART II

Item 5. Market for Registrant's Common Equity, Related Stockholder Matters and Issuer Purchases of Equity Securities

Our common stock is listed on the NYSE under the symbol "WMC". The following table sets forth the high, low and last sales prices for our common stock, as reported on the NYSE:

Period	High	Low	Close
2017			
First Quarter	\$10.55	\$9.43	\$9.77
Second Quarter	\$10.84	\$9.58	\$10.30
Third Quarter	\$10.95	\$10.02	\$10.47
Fourth Quarter	\$10.75	\$9.50	\$9.95
2016			
First Quarter	\$10.95	\$8.04	\$10.05
Second Quarter	\$10.18	\$8.71	\$9.39
Third Quarter	\$11.03	\$9.22	\$10.42
Fourth Quarter	\$11.18	\$9.63	\$10.07

The following table summarizes our dividends declared on common stock, on a per share basis, for the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016:

Declaration Date	Record Date	Payment Date	Common Stock Dividend
2017			
December 21, 2017	January 2, 2018	January 26, 2018	\$0.31
September 21, 2017	October 2, 2017	October 26, 2017	\$0.31
June 20, 2017	June 30, 2017	July 26, 2017	\$0.31
March 23, 2017	April 3, 2017	April 26, 2017	\$0.31
2016			
December 22, 2016	January 3, 2017	January 26, 2017	\$0.31
September 22, 2016	October 4, 2016	October 25, 2016	\$0.31
June 23, 2016	July 5, 2016	July 26, 2016	\$0.31
March 24, 2016	April 4, 2016	April 26, 2016	\$0.45

In order to maintain our qualification as a REIT, we must make annual distributions to our stockholders of at least 90% of our taxable income (not including net capital gains). We have adopted a policy of paying regular quarterly dividends on our common stock. Refer to Note 11- "Stockholders' Equity" to our Consolidated Financial Statements included in Item 8 of this annual report on Form 10-K for details on the tax characterization of our dividend.

A combination of cash and stock dividends has been paid on our common stock since our initial public offering. Dividends are declared at the discretion of the Board of Directors and depend on actual and anticipated cash from operations, our financial condition, capital requirements, the annual distribution requirements under the REIT provisions of the Internal Revenue Code and other factors the Board of Directors may consider relevant.

As of March 28, 2018, we had 7 registered holders of our common stock and 41,679,679 shares outstanding.

Securities Authorized for Issuance Under Equity Compensation Plans

In conjunction with our IPO and concurrent private placement, our Board of Directors approved the Western Asset Mortgage Capital Corporation Equity Plan (the "Equity Plan") and the Western Asset Manager Equity Plan (the "Manager Equity Plan" and collectively the "Equity Incentive Plans"). For further details, see Note 10 "Share-Based Payments" to the Consolidated Financial Statements included under Item 8 in this Form 10-K.

The following table presents certain information about the Equity Incentive Plans as of December 31, 2017:

Award	Number of securities to be issued upon exercise of outstanding options, warrants and rights	Weighted-average price of outstanding options, warrants and rights	Number of securities remaining available for future issuance under equity compensation plans
Restricted common stock	N/A	N/A	512,262
Total	—	—	512,262

Stockholder Return Performance

The following graph is a comparison of the cumulative total stockholder return on the Company's common stock, the Standard & Poor's 500 Index (the "S&P 500 Index"), the Russell 2000 Index (the "Russell 2000") and the FTSE NAREIT Mortgage REITs Index (the "FTSE Mortgage REIT"), a peer group index for a five year period from December 31, 2012 to December 31, 2017, and accordingly does not take into account the dividend the Company declared on December 21, 2017 and paid on January 26, 2018. The graph assumes that \$100 was invested on December 31, 2012 in the Company's common stock, the S&P 500 Index, the Russell 2000 and the FTSE Mortgage REIT and that all dividends were reinvested without the payment of any commissions. There can be no assurance that the performance of the Company's shares will continue in line with the same or similar trends depicted in the graph below.

Index	12/31/12	12/31/13	12/31/14	12/31/15	12/31/16	12/31/17
Western Asset Mortgage Capital Corp	100.00	101.28	120.08	100.83	113.75	126.73
S&P 500	100.00	132.39	150.51	152.59	170.84	208.14
Russell 2000	100.00	138.82	145.62	139.19	168.85	193.58
FTSE NAREIT Mortgage REIT	100.00	98.04	115.57	105.31	129.38	154.98

Recent Sales of Unregistered Securities: Use of Proceeds from Registered Securities

Not applicable.

Purchase of Equity Securities by the Issuer

On December 21, 2017, the Board of Directors of the Company reauthorized its repurchase program of up to 2,100,000 shares of its common stock through December 31, 2019. The previous reauthorization announced on February 25, 2016 of the Company's repurchase program of up to 2,050,000 shares of its common stock expired on December 31, 2017. The original authorization expired on December 31, 2015. Purchases made pursuant to the program will be made in the open market, in privately negotiated transactions, or pursuant to any trading plan that may be adopted in accordance with Rules 10b5-1 and 10b-18 of the Securities and Exchange Commission. The authorization does not obligate the Company to acquire any particular amount of common shares and the program may be suspended or discontinued at the Company's discretion without prior notice.

The following table shows common shares repurchase activity during the year ended December 31, 2017:

Month	Total Number of Shares Purchased	Average Price Paid Per Share ⁽¹⁾	Total Number of Shares Purchased as Part of Publicly Announced Plans or Programs	Maximum Number of Shares that May Yet Be Purchased Under the Plans or Programs at the end of period ⁽¹⁾
October 1 - 31, 2017	—	—	—	2,100,000
November 1- 30, 2017	107,707	\$ 9.76	107,707	1,992,293
December 1 - 31, 2017	18,015	\$ 10.02	18,015	1,974,278
Total	125,722		125,722	

(1) Includes brokers commission of \$0.03 per share.

Item 6. Selected Financial Data

The information below should be read in conjunction with "Item 7. Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" and our consolidated financial statements and related notes included in Item 8. "Financial Statements and Supplementary Data," included in this annual report on Form 10-K.

in thousands—except share and per share data	Year ended December 31, 2017	Year ended December 31, 2016	Year ended December 31, 2015	Year ended December 31, 2014	Year ended December 31, 2013
Operating Data:					
Net Interest Income					
Interest income	\$124,291	\$123,756	\$152,704	\$149,110	\$125,328
Interest expense	48,373	32,430	27,605	22,263	18,019
Net Interest Income	75,918	91,326	125,099	126,847	107,309
Other Income (Loss):					
Realized gain (loss) on sale of investments, net	20,598	(21,991)	8,279	(2,178)	(110,712)
Other than temporary impairment	(22,873)	(32,286)	(19,791)	(17,014)	(11,858)
Unrealized gain (loss), net	28,396	(17,107)	(34,011)	189,011	(160,109)
Gain (loss) on derivative instruments, net	3,292	(20,735)	(68,895)	(180,496)	157,547
Gain on linked transactions, net	—	—	—	1,870	4,137
Other, net	1,031	180	2,318	1,433	91
Other Income (Loss)	30,444	(91,939)	(112,100)	(7,374)	(120,904)
Operating expenses	10,519	11,493	12,888	10,394	8,485
General and administrative expenses	7,259	9,753	9,595	8,366	5,775
Income (loss) before income taxes	88,584	(21,859)	(9,484)	100,713	(27,855)
Income tax provision (benefit)	3,487	3,156	—	—	—
Net Income (loss)	\$85,097	\$(25,015)	\$(9,484)	\$100,713	\$(27,855)
Net income (loss) per Common Share—Basic	\$2.03	\$(0.61)	\$(0.25)	\$2.67	\$(1.19)
Net income (loss) per Common Share—Diluted	\$2.03	\$(0.61)	\$(0.25)	\$2.67	\$(1.19)
Dividends Declared per Share of Common Stock	\$1.24	\$1.38	\$2.49	\$2.74	\$5.10 (1)
Balance Sheet Data (at period end):					
Total assets	\$3,886,906	\$3,156,016	\$3,414,429	\$4,909,277	\$3,094,877
Total liabilities	\$3,420,868	\$2,725,534	\$2,902,781	\$4,286,065	\$2,684,783
Total stockholders' equity	\$466,038	\$430,482	\$511,648	\$623,212	\$410,094
Other Data:					
Cash flow provided by (used in):					
Operating activities	\$59,382	\$11,546	\$133,898	\$107,374	\$179,341
Investing activities	\$(1,202,572)	\$504,631	\$1,359,855	\$(1,311,678)	\$2,002,411
Financing activities	\$1,145,043	\$(494,799)	\$(1,516,439)	\$1,203,001	\$(2,189,519)

(1) Includes \$2.35 dividend per share declared on December 19, 2013, consisting of cash and stock.

ITEM 7. Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations.

The following discussion provides the reader a narrative from the perspective of management and should be read in conjunction with our consolidated financial statements and related notes included in Item 8, "Financial Statements and Supplementary Data" of this annual report on Form 10-K.

Overview

The size and composition of our portfolio depend on investment strategies implemented by our Manager, the accessibility to capital and overall market conditions, including availability of attractively priced target assets and financing. Our objective is to provide an attractive risk adjusted return to our shareholders over the long term. Our Manager has built a diversified portfolio of our target assets to better enable us to deliver attractive returns through market cycles. Our portfolio is mainly comprised of Agency CMBS, Agency RMBS, Non-Agency RMBS, Non-Agency CMBS and Residential Whole-Loans and Residential Bridge Loans. To a significantly lesser extent, we have invested in other securities including certain GSE Risk Sharing Securities, as well as certain Non U.S. CMBS and ABS investments secured by a portfolio of private student loans. In addition, our holdings include a securitized commercial loan from a consolidated VIE.

We use leverage as part of our business strategy in order to increase potential returns to our stockholders. We accomplish this by borrowing against existing investments primarily through repurchase agreements. We may also change our financing strategy and leverage without the consent of our stockholders.

We operate and elected to be taxed as a REIT, commencing with our taxable year ended December 31, 2012. We generally will not be subject to U.S. federal income taxes on our taxable income to the extent that we annually distribute, in accordance with the REIT regulations, all of our net taxable income to stockholders and maintain our intended qualification as a REIT. Certain of our non-qualifying investments were held in our taxable REIT subsidiary or "TRS". Net income generated in our TRS is taxable and subject to federal, state and local income tax at the applicable corporate tax rates.

We also intend to operate our business in a manner that will permit us to maintain our exemption from registration under the 1940 Act.

Factors Impacting Our Operating Results

Our operating results can be affected by a number of factors and primarily depend on, among other things, the size of our investment portfolio, our net interest income, changes in the market value of our investments, derivative instruments and to a lesser extent realized gains and losses on the sale of our investments and termination of our derivative instruments. Our overall performance is also impacted by the supply and demand for our target assets in the market, the terms and availability of financing for such assets, general economic conditions, the impact of U.S. Government actions that affect the real estate and mortgage sectors, and the unanticipated credit events experienced by borrowers whose loans are included in our MBS, as well as our Residential Whole and Bridge Loan borrowers.

Our net interest income, which includes the amortization of purchase premiums and accretion of discounts, will vary primarily as a result of changes in interest rates, defaults and loss severity rates, borrowing costs, and prepayment speeds on our MBS and other Target Assets (as defined herein) investments. Similarly, the overall value of our investment portfolio will be impacted by these factors as well as changes in the value of residential and commercial real estate and continuing regulatory changes.

See the Item 1A. "Risk Factors" in this annual report on Form 10-K for additional factors that may impact our operating results.

Recent Market Conditions

Our business is affected by general U.S. residential real estate fundamentals, domestic and foreign commercial real estate fundamentals and the overall U.S. and international economic environment. In particular, our strategy is influenced by the specific characteristics of these markets, including but not limited to prepayment rates and interest rate levels. We expect the results of our operations to be affected by various factors, many of which are beyond our control.

Our Manager's global outlook for 2017 was in line with market expectations for both robust growth and improving inflation has proven more optimistic than anticipated. The consensus transitioned from expectations for secular stagnation before the US election to global reflation afterward, to a more moderate tone today focusing on central bank monetary policy normalization. Our Manager's current expectations for 2018 is for ongoing slow but steady economic growth and moderate inflation, both in the U.S. and abroad. During the fourth quarter of 2017, the Federal Reserve raised the federal funds rate a quarter point, which indicates

the central bank is confident in the strength of the economy and ready to push rates to more normal levels. President Trump's nomination of Jerome Powell as the next Federal Reserve chair is predicted to bring little change to the central bank's incremental rate increases and monetary policy normalization but we have yet to see how the FOMC might react to unexpected inflation. At the meeting in January 2018, the FOMC, left the federal funds rate at 1.5% since inflation is still below target, although unemployment is low. The FOMC expects inflation to meet its 2% target in 2018 and expects to gradually raise the federal funds rate to its normal level of 2%. At the March 2018 meeting, the FOMC raised the rate another quarter point from 1.5% to 1.75%, with two more rate hikes anticipated in 2018. The FOMC, as part of its balance sheet reduction plan, will allow \$12 billion of Treasury securities to mature without replacing them. It will do the same with \$8 billion of mortgage-backed securities. The Federal Reserve is gradually winding down the \$4 trillion in holdings it acquired during quantitative easing. Accordingly, we expect potentially three rate increases in 2018. We believe the Agency RMBS sector is at risk for spread widening in the longer term. Against this backdrop, the fundamentals in the U.S. housing market remain strong and spreads for most mortgages remained supported during the fourth quarter of 2017 despite three significant hurricanes.

The market conditions outlined above may have a meaningful impact on our operating results and our existing portfolio and may cause us to adjust our investment and financing strategies over time as new opportunities emerge and the risk profiles of our business changes.

Critical Accounting Policies

The consolidated financial statements include our accounts, those of our consolidated wholly-owned TRS and certain variable interest entities ("VIEs") in which we are the primary beneficiary. All intercompany amounts have been eliminated in consolidation. In accordance with GAAP, our consolidated financial statements require the use of estimates and assumptions that involve the exercise of judgment and use of assumptions as to future uncertainties. In accordance with SEC guidance, the following discussion addresses the accounting policies that we currently apply. Our most critical accounting policies will involve decisions and assessments that could affect our reported assets and liabilities, as well as our reported revenues and expenses. We believe that all of the decisions and assessments upon which our consolidated financial statements have been based were reasonable at the time made and based upon information available to us at that time. For a review of recent accounting pronouncements that may impact our results of operations, refer Note 2 - "Summary of Significant Accounting Policies" contained in this annual report on Form 10-K.

Valuation of Financial Instruments

We disclose the fair value of our financial instruments according to a fair value hierarchy (Levels I, II, and III, as defined below). ASC 820 "Fair Value Measurements and Disclosures" establishes a framework for measuring fair value and expands financial statement disclosure requirements for fair value measurements. ASC 820 further specifies a hierarchy of valuation techniques, which is based on whether the inputs into the valuation technique are observable or unobservable. The hierarchy is as follows:

Level I — Quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities.

Level II — Quoted prices for similar assets and liabilities in active markets; quoted prices for identical or similar instruments in markets that are not active; and model-derived valuations whose inputs are observable or whose significant value drivers are observable.

Level III — Prices are determined using significant unobservable inputs. In situations where quoted prices or observable inputs are unavailable, for example, when there is little or no market activity for an investment at the end of the period, unobservable inputs may be used.

The level in the fair value hierarchy within which a fair value measurement in its entirety falls is based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement in its entirety. Transfers between levels are determined by us at the end of the reporting period.

Mortgage-Backed Securities and Other Securities

Our mortgage-backed securities and other securities portfolio primarily consists of Agency RMBS, Non-Agency RMBS, Agency CMBS, Non-Agency CMBS, ABS and other real estate related assets, these investments are recorded in accordance with ASC 320, "Investments - Debt and Equity Securities", ASC 325-40, "Beneficial Interests in Securitized Financial Assets" or ASC 310-30, "Loans and Debt Securities Acquired with Deteriorated Credit Quality". We have chosen to make a fair value election pursuant to ASC 825, "Financial Instruments" for our mortgage-backed securities and other securities portfolio. Electing the fair

value option allows us to record changes in fair value in the Consolidated Statements of Operations as a component of "Unrealized gain (loss), net".

If we purchase securities with evidence of credit deterioration, we will analyze to determine if the guidance found in ASC 310-30, "Loans and Debt Securities Acquired with Deteriorated Credit Quality" is applicable.

We evaluate securities for other-than-temporary impairment ("OTTI") on at least a quarterly basis. The determination of whether a security is other-than-temporarily impaired involves judgments, estimates and assumptions based on subjective and objective factors. As a result, the timing and amount of an OTTI constitutes an accounting estimate that may change materially over time.

When the fair value of an investment security is less than its amortized cost at the balance sheet date, the security is considered impaired, and the impairment is designated as either "temporary" or "other-than-temporary." When a security is impaired, an OTTI is considered to have occurred if (i) if we intend to sell the security (i.e., a decision has been made as of the reporting date) or (ii) it is more likely than not that we will be required to sell the security before recovery of its amortized cost basis. If we intend to sell the security or if it is more likely than not that we will be required to sell the security before recovery of its amortized cost basis, the entire amount of the impairment loss, if any, is recognized in earnings as OTTI and the cost basis of the security is adjusted to its fair value. Additionally, for securities accounted for under ASC 325-40 an OTTI is deemed to have occurred when there is an adverse change in the expected cash flows to be received and the fair value of the security is less than its carrying amount. In determining whether an adverse change in cash flows occurred, the present value of the remaining cash flows, as estimated at the initial transaction date (or the last date previously revised), is compared to the present value of the expected cash flows at the current reporting date. The estimated cash flows reflect those a "market participant" would use and are discounted at a rate equal to the current yield used to accrete interest income. Any resulting OTTI adjustments are reflected in "Other than temporary impairment" in our Consolidated Statements of Operations.

Increases in interest income may be recognized on a security on which we have previously recorded an OTTI charge if the cash flow of such security subsequently improves.

In addition, unrealized losses on our Agency securities, with explicit guarantee of principal and interest by the governmental sponsored entity ("GSE"), are not credit losses but rather were due to changes in interest rates and prepayment expectations. These securities would not be considered other than temporarily impaired provided we did not intend to sell the security.

Residential Whole-Loans

Investments in Residential Whole-Loans are recorded in accordance with ASC 310-20, "Nonrefundable Fees and Other Costs". We have chosen to make the fair value election pursuant to ASC 825 for our entire Residential Whole-Loan portfolio. Residential Whole-Loans are recorded at fair value with periodic changes in fair market value being recorded in earnings as a component of "Unrealized gain (loss), net". All other costs incurred in connection with acquiring Residential Whole-Loans or committing to purchase these loans are charged to expense as incurred.

On a quarterly basis, we evaluate the collectability of both interest and principal of each loan, if circumstances warrant, to determine whether such loan is impaired. A loan is impaired when, based on current information and events, it is probable that we will be unable to collect all amounts due according to the existing contractual terms. When a loan is impaired, we do not record an allowance for loan loss as we have elected the fair value option. However, income recognition is suspended for loans at the earlier of the date at which payments become 90-days past due or when, in the opinion of management, a full recovery of income and principal becomes doubtful. When the

ultimate collectability of the principal of an impaired loan is in doubt, all payments are applied to principal under the cost recovery method. When the ultimate collectability of the principal of an impaired loan is not in doubt, contractual interest is recorded as interest income when received, under the cash basis method until an accrual is resumed when the loan becomes contractually current and performance is demonstrated to be resumed. A loan is written off when it is no longer realizable and/or legally discharged.

Residential Bridge Loans

For the Bridge Loans acquired prior to October 25, 2017, we did not elect the fair value option pursuant to ASC 825 and accordingly these loans are recorded at their principal amount outstanding, net of any premium or discount in the Consolidated Balance Sheets. Commencing with purchases subsequent to October 25, 2017, we decided to elected the fair value option pursuant to ASC 825 to be consistent with the accounting of our other investments, which are all carried at fair value. These loans are recorded at fair value with periodic changes in fair market value being recorded in earnings as a component of "Unrealized gain

(loss), net". All other costs incurred in connection with acquiring the Residential Bridge Loans or committing to purchase these loans are charged to expense as incurred.

A loan is impaired when, based on current information and events, it is probable that we will be unable to collect all amounts due according to the existing contractual terms. We evaluate each of Residential Bridge Loans that we did not elect the fair value option on a quarterly basis. These loans are individually specific as they relate to the borrower, collateral type, interest rate, LTV and term as well as geographic location. We evaluate the collectability of both principal and interest of each loan. When a loan is impaired, the impairment is then measured based on fair value of the collateral, since these loans are collateral dependent. Upon measurement of impairment, we record an allowance to reduce the carrying value of the loan with a corresponding charge to net income. Significant judgments are required in determining impairment, including assumptions regarding the value of the loan, the value of the underlying collateral and other provisions such as guarantees. We will not record an allowance for loan loss for the Residential Bridge Loans that Company has elected the fair value option.

Income recognition is suspended for loans at the earlier of the date at which payments become 90-days past due or when, in the opinion of management, a full recovery of income and principal becomes doubtful. When the ultimate collectability of the principal of an impaired loan is in doubt, all payments are applied to principal under the cost recovery method. When the ultimate collectability of the principal of an impaired loan is not in doubt, contractual interest is recorded as interest income when received, under the cash basis method until an accrual is resumed when the loan becomes contractually current and performance is demonstrated to be resumed. A loan is written off when it is no longer realizable and/or it is legally discharged.

Interest Income Recognition

Agency MBS, Non-Agency MBS and other securities, excluding Interest-Only Strips, rated AA and higher at the time of purchase

Interest income on mortgage-backed and other securities is accrued based on the respective outstanding principal balances and corresponding contractual terms. We record interest income in accordance with ASC subtopic 835-30 "Imputation of Interest", using the effective interest method. As such premiums and discounts associated with Agency MBS, Non-Agency MBS and other securities, excluding Interest-Only Strips, rated AA and higher at the time of purchase, are amortized into interest income over the estimated life of such securities. Adjustments to premium and discount amortization are made for actual prepayment activity. We estimate prepayments at least quarterly for our securities and, as a result, if the projected prepayment speed increases, we will accelerate the rate of amortization on premiums or discounts and make a retrospective adjustment to historical amortization. Alternatively, if projected prepayment speeds decrease, we will reduce the rate of amortization on the premiums or discounts and make a retrospective adjustment to historical amortization.

Non-Agency MBS and other securities that are rated below AA at the time of purchase and Interest-Only Strips that are not classified as derivatives

Interest income on Non-Agency MBS and other securities that are rated below AA at the time of purchase and Interest-Only Strips that are not classified as derivatives are also recognized in accordance with ASC 835, using the effective yield method. The effective yield on these securities is based on the projected cash flows from each security, which is estimated based on our observation of the then current information and events, where applicable, and will include assumptions related to interest rates, prepayment rates and the timing and amount of credit losses. On at least a quarterly basis, we review and, if appropriate, make adjustments to our cash flow projections based on input and analysis received from external sources, internal models, and our judgment about interest rates, prepayment rates, the

timing and amount of credit losses, and other factors. Where appropriate, we may include in our cash flow projections the U.S. Department of Justice's settlements with the major residential mortgage originators, regarding certain lending practices. Changes in cash flows from those originally projected, or from those estimated at the last evaluation, may result in a prospective change in the yield/interest income recognized on such securities. Actual maturities of the securities are affected by the contractual lives of the underlying collateral, periodic payments of scheduled principal, and prepayments of principal. Therefore, actual maturities of the securities will generally be shorter than stated contractual maturities.

Based on the projected cash flow of such securities purchased at a discount to par value, we may designate a portion of such purchase discount as credit protection against future credit losses and, therefore, not accrete such amount into interest income. The amount designated as credit discount may be adjusted over time, based on the actual performance of the security, its underlying collateral, actual and projected cash flow from such collateral, economic conditions and other factors. If the performance of a security with a credit discount is more favorable than forecasted, a portion of the amount designated as credit discount may be accreted into interest income prospectively.

Residential Whole-Loans and Residential Bridge Loans

Interest income on our residential loan portfolio is recorded in accordance with ASC 835 using the effective interest method based on the contractual payment terms of the loan. Any premium amortization or discount accretion will be reflected as a component of "Interest income" in our Consolidated Statements of Operations.

Variable Interest Entities ("VIEs")

VIEs are defined as entities that by design either lack sufficient equity for the entity to finance its activities without additional subordinated financial support or are unable to direct the entity's activities or are not exposed to the entity's losses or entitled to its residual returns. We evaluate all of our interests in VIEs for consolidation. When the interests are determined to be variable interests, we assess whether we are deemed the primary beneficiary. The primary beneficiary of a VIE is determined to be the party that has both the power to direct the activities of a VIE that most significantly impact the VIE's economic performance and the obligation to absorb losses or the right to receive benefits of the VIE that could potentially be significant to the VIE.

To assess whether we have the power to direct the activities of a VIE that most significantly impact the VIE's economic performance, we consider all facts and circumstances, including our role in establishing the VIE and our ongoing rights and responsibilities. This assessment includes first, identifying the activities that most significantly impact the VIE's economic performance; and second, identifying which party, if any, has power over those activities. In general, the parties that make the most significant decisions affecting the VIE or have the right to unilaterally remove those decision makers is deemed to have the power to direct the activities of a VIE.

To assess whether we have the obligation to absorb losses of the VIE or the right to receive benefits from the VIE that could potentially be significant to the VIE, we consider all of our economic interests. This assessment requires that we apply judgment in determining whether these interests, in the aggregate, are considered potentially significant to the VIE. Factors considered in assessing significance include: the design of the VIE, including its capitalization structure; subordination of interests; payment priority; relative share of interests held across various classes within the VIE's capital structure; and the reasons why the interests are held by us.

In instances when a VIE is owned by both us and related parties, we consider whether there is a single party in the related party group that meets both the power and losses or benefits criteria on its own as though no related party relationship existed. If one party within the related party group meets both these criteria, such reporting entity is the primary beneficiary of the VIE and no further analysis is needed. If no party within the related party group on its own meets both the power and losses or benefits criteria, but the related party group does as a whole meets these two criteria, the determination of primary beneficiary within the related party group is based upon an analysis of the facts and circumstances with the objective of determining which party is most closely associated with the VIE.

Determining the primary beneficiary within the related party group requires significant judgement.

In instances when we are required to consolidate a VIE that is determined to be a qualifying collateralized financing entity, under GAAP, we will measure both the financial assets and financial liabilities of the VIE using the fair value of either the VIE's financial assets or financial liabilities, whichever is more observable.

Ongoing assessments of whether an enterprise is the primary beneficiary of a VIE is required.

Derivatives and Hedging Activities

Subject to maintaining our qualification as a REIT for U.S. federal income tax purposes, as part of our hedging strategy, we may enter into, but not limited to, interest rate swaps, including forward starting swaps, interest rate swaptions, U.S. Treasury options, future contracts, TBAs, Agency and Non-Agency interest only strips total return

swaps, credit default swaps and foreign current swaps and forwards. Derivatives, subject to REIT requirements, are used for hedging purposes rather than speculation. We determine the fair value of our derivative positions and obtain quotations from third parties, including the Chicago Mercantile Exchange or CME, to facilitate the process of determining such fair values. If our hedging activities do not achieve the desired results, reported earnings may be adversely affected.

GAAP requires an entity to recognize all derivatives as either assets or liabilities on the balance sheet and to measure those instruments at fair value. The accounting for changes in the fair value of derivatives depends on the intended use of the derivative. The fair value adjustment will affect either other comprehensive income in stockholders' equity until the hedged item is recognized in earnings or net income depending on whether the derivative instrument is designated and qualifies as a hedge for accounting purposes and if so, the nature of the hedging activity. We have elected not to apply hedge accounting for our derivative instruments. Accordingly, we record the change in fair value of our derivative instruments, which includes net interest rate swap payments/receipts (including accrued amounts) and net currency payments/receipts (including accrued amounts) related

to interest rate swaps and currency swaps, respectively in "Gain (loss) on derivative instruments, net" in our Consolidated Statements of Operations.

In January 2017, the CME amended its rulebooks to legally characterize variation margin payments and receipts for over-the-counter derivatives they clear as settlements of the derivatives' exposure rather than collateral against exposure. As a result of the change in legal characterization, effective January 1, 2017, variation margin is no longer classified as collateral in the Consolidated Balance Sheets in either "Due from counterparties" or "Due to counterparties", but rather a component of the respective "Derivative asset, at fair value" or "Derivative liability, at fair value" in the Consolidated Balance Sheets. The variation margin is now considered partial settlements of the derivative contract and will result in realized gains or losses which prior to January 1, 2017 were classified as unrealized gains or losses on derivatives. Prior to the CME rulebook change variation margin was included in financing activities in our Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows in either "Due from counterparties, net" or "Due to counterparties, net". Commencing in January 2017, cash postings for variation margin are included in operating activities in the Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows.

Proceeds and payments on settlement of swaptions, mortgage put options, futures contracts credit default swaps and TBAs are included in cash flows from investing activities. Proceeds and payments on settlement of forward contracts are reflected in cash flows from financing activities in our Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows. For Agency and Non-Agency Interest-Only Strips accounted for as derivatives, the purchase, sale and recovery of basis activity is included with MBS and other securities under cash flows from investing activities in our Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows.

We evaluate the terms and conditions of our holdings of Agency and Non-Agency Interest-Only Strips, interest rate swaptions, currency forwards, futures contracts and TBAs to determine if these instruments have the characteristics of an investment or should be considered a derivative under GAAP. In determining the classification of our holdings of Interest-Only Strips, we evaluate the securities to determine if the nature of the cash flows has been altered from that of the underlying mortgage collateral. Interest-Only Strips, for which the underlying mortgage collateral has been included into a structured security that alters the cash flows from the underlying mortgage collateral, are accounted for as derivatives. The carrying value of our Agency and Non-Agency Interest-Only Strips, accounted for as derivatives, is included in "Mortgage-backed securities and other securities, at fair value" in our Consolidated Balance Sheets. The carrying value of interest rate swaptions, currency forwards, futures contracts and TBAs is included in "Derivative assets, at fair value" or "Derivative liability, at fair value" in our Consolidated Balance Sheets. Interest earned or paid along with the change in fair value of these instruments accounted for as derivatives is recorded in "Gain (loss) on derivative instruments, net" in our Consolidated Statements of Operations".

We evaluate all of our financial instruments to determine if such instruments are derivatives or contain features that qualify as embedded derivatives. An embedded derivative is separated from the host contract and accounted for separately when all of the guidance criteria are met. Hybrid instruments that are remeasured at fair value through earnings, including the fair value option, are not bifurcated. Derivative instruments, including derivative instruments accounted for as liabilities are recorded at fair value and are re-valued at each reporting date, with changes in the fair value together with interest earned or paid (including accrued amounts) reported in "Gain (loss) on derivative instruments, net" in our Consolidated Statements of Operations.

2017 Activity

Investment Activity

In December of 2016, we evaluated our investments in Agency RMBS and Non-Agency RMBS, focusing on expected future prepayment trends, supply of and demand, costs of financing, costs of hedging, expected future interest rate volatility and the overall shape of the U.S. Treasury and interest rate swap yield curves. Based on our evaluation and our long-term views of the Agency RMBS sector, we decided to reposition our portfolio, reducing our exposure to Agency RMBS and legacy Non-Agency RMBS and deployed capital to acquire Agency CMBS, Non-Agency CMBS, Residential Whole and Bridge Loans and Non-Agency RMBS collateralized by reperforming loan pools.

The following table presents our investing activity for the year ended December 31, 2017 (dollars in thousands):

Investment Type	Balance at December 31, 2016	Purchases	Principal Payments and Basis	Proceeds from Sales	Realized Gain/(Loss)	Unrealized Gain/(loss)	Premium and discount amortization, net	OTTI	Balance at December 31, 2017
Agency RMBS and Agency RMBS IOs	\$1,469,970	\$632,100	\$(138,811)	\$(1,254,559)	\$(2,483)	\$7,202	\$(9,084)	\$(6,302)	\$698,033
Non-Agency RMBS	308,242	37,668	(11,634)	(246,033)	22,208	(12,969)	2,072	—	99,554
Agency CMBS and Agency CMBS IOs	371,624	1,787,174	(5,254)	—	—	6,398	717	(92)	2,160,567
Non-Agency CMBS	358,919	51,511	(84,303)	(54,875)	740	13,453	8,276	(15,117)	278,604
Other securities ⁽¹⁾	67,762	81,000	(783)	(38,447)	659	12,297	1,559	(1,982)	122,065
Total MBS and other securities	2,576,517	2,589,453	(240,785)	(1,593,914)	21,124	26,381	3,540	(23,493)	3,358,823
Residential Whole-Loans	192,136	88,879	(43,221)	—	—	723	(1,094)	—	237,423
Residential Bridge Loans	—	143,666	(37,175)	—	—	558	(376)	—	106,673
Securitized commercial loan	24,225	—	(154)	—	—	805	—	—	24,876
Total Investments	\$2,792,878	\$2,821,998	\$(321,335)	\$(1,593,914)	\$21,124	\$28,467	\$2,070	\$(23,493)	\$3,727,795

(1) Other securities includes \$89.8 million of GSE CRTs and \$32.2 million of ABS at December 31, 2017.

We increased Agency CMBS holdings from 13.3% in 2016 to 57.9% in 2017, reducing our Agency RMBS holdings by 52.5%. The underlying collateral for the Agency CMBS are multifamily residential loans guaranteed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. We find this sector attractive because the underlying loans have built in prepayment protection and therefore are less sensitive to interest rate risk and have a lower cost of hedging compared to Agency RMBS. In

addition, since Agency CMBS are not held on the Federal Reserve's balance sheet, these securities will not be subject to potential spread widening from the Federal Reserve's balance sheet reduction plan.

We continue to see favorable risk-adjusted return opportunities in credit sensitive investments, particularly Residential Whole and Bridge Loans, securitized pools of prime jumbo loans and commercial mezzanine loans, including junior tranches. We intend to continue to deploy capital into credit sensitive investments. At December 31, 2017, we held \$869.2 million in credit sensitive investments, primarily consisting of 32.1% Non-Agency CMBS, 27.3% Residential Whole-Loans, 12.3% Residential Bridge Loans, 11.5% Non-Agency RMBS, which includes investments in securitized reperforming loans of \$37.2 million and 10.3% GSE credit risk transfer securities. We work to mitigate the credit risk on our credit sensitive holdings by developing relationships with originators that adhere to our investment guidelines for our Residential Whole and Bridge Loans and for the other investments we perform a detailed credit analysis on the underlying collateral at the time of purchase.

Portfolio Characteristics

Agency Portfolio

The following table summarizes certain characteristics of our Agency portfolio by issuer and investment category as of December 31, 2017 (dollars in thousands):

	Principal Balance	Amortized Cost	Fair Value	Net Weighted Average Coupon ⁽¹⁾	
Agency RMBS 20-Year, 30-Year and 40-Year					
Fannie Mae	\$ 572,185	\$ 597,210	\$598,895	3.8	%
Freddie Mac	68,859	72,710	73,282	4.2	%
Total Agency RMBS 20-Year, 30-Year and 40-Year	641,044	669,920	672,177	3.9	%
Agency RMBS IOs and IIOs ⁽²⁾					
Fannie Mae	N/A	6,051	6,626	3.4	%
Freddie Mac	N/A	5,148	5,203	2.4	%
Ginnie Mae	N/A	3,551	3,608	3.1	%
Total Agency RMBS IOs and IIOs ⁽²⁾	N/A	14,750	15,437	2.9	%
Agency RMBS IOs and IIOs accounted for as derivatives ⁽²⁾					
Fannie Mae	N/A	N/A	7,989	2.6	%
Freddie Mac	N/A	N/A	1,370	3.2	%
Ginnie Mae	N/A	N/A	1,060	4.4	%
Total Agency RMBS IOs and IIOs accounted for as derivatives ⁽²⁾	N/A	N/A	10,419	2.9	%
Total: Agency RMBS	641,044	684,670	698,033	3.6	%
Agency CMBS					
Fannie Mae	2,145,139	2,147,281	2,154,800	2.9	%
Agency CMBS IOs and IIOs ⁽²⁾					
Fannie Mae	N/A	—	10	3.2	%
Agency CMBS IOs and IIOs accounted for as derivatives ⁽²⁾					
Ginnie Mae	N/A	N/A	5,757	0.5	%
Total: Agency CMBS	2,145,139	2,147,281	2,160,567	2.7	%
Total	\$ 2,786,183	\$ 2,831,951	\$2,858,600	3.0	%

(1) Net weighted average coupon as of December 31, 2017 is presented net of servicing and other fees.

(2) IOs and IIOs have no principal balances and bear interest based on a notional balance. The notional balance is used solely to determine interest distributions on the interest-only class of securities.

Credit Sensitive Portfolio

The following table presents information by vintage⁽¹⁾ as it relates to our credit sensitive investment portfolio at December 31, 2017:

Credit Securities	Pre 2006	2006	2007	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Non-Agency RMBS	3.0%	2.7%	1.4%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	3.3%	10.4%
Non-Agency RMBS IOs	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	1.0%	1.0%
Non-Agency CMBS	—%	6.2%	6.6%	—%	4.0%	0.8%	0.4%	2.5%	8.7%	—%	2.9%	32.1%
Other securities	1.1%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	1.1%	1.6%	4.4%	6.0%	14.2%
Residential Whole-Loans	0.2%	—%	—%	0.1%	0.6%	1.0%	8.8%	4.3%	0.2%	6.3%	5.7%	27.2%
Residential Bridge Loans	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	0.3%	2.4%	9.5%	12.2%
Securitized commercial loan	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	—%	2.9%	—%	2.9%
Total	4.3%	8.9%	8.0%	0.1%	4.6%	1.8%	9.2%	7.9%	10.8%	16.0%	28.4%	100.0%

(1)Based on carrying amount of the investments.

Non-Agency RMBS

The following table presents the fair value and weighted average purchase price for each of our Non-agency RMBS categories, including IOs accounted for as derivatives, together with certain of their respective underlying loan collateral attributes and current performance metrics as of December 31, 2017 (fair value dollars in thousands):

Category	Fair Value	Weighted Average		Original LTV	Original FICO	60+ Day Delinquent	6-Month CPR
		Purchase Price	Life (Years)				
Alt-A	\$ 91,417	\$70.60	8.1	77.5%	689	11.0%	11.6%
Subprime	8,137	58.57	8.1	77.4%	598	19.9%	6.3%
Total	\$ 99,554	\$69.62	8.1	77.5%	682	11.8%	11.2%

Non-Agency CMBS

The following table presents certain characteristics of our Non-Agency CMBS portfolio as of December 31, 2017 (dollars in thousands):

Type	Vintage	Principal		Weighted Average		
		Balance	Fair Value	Life (Years)	Original LTV	
Conduit:						
	2006-2009	\$140,538	\$ 111,661	2.8	72.1%	
	2010-2016	177,245	111,065	7.8	64.0%	
		317,783	222,726	5.3	68.1%	
Single Asset:						
	2010-2016	61,400	55,878	3.8	62.7%	
Total		\$379,183	\$ 278,604	5.0	67.0%	

Residential Whole-Loans

The following table presents certain information about our Residential Whole-Loan investment portfolio as of December 31, 2017 (dollars in thousands):

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Current Coupon Rate	Number of Loans	Principal Balance	Weighted Average			Contractual Maturity (years)	Coupon Rate
			Original LTV	Original FICO Score ⁽¹⁾	Expected Life (years)		
3.01 - 4.00%	142	\$55,593	55.5%	751	1.7	29.1	3.9 %
4.01 - 5.00%	338	125,860	56.9%	725	1.4	26.5	4.5 %
5.01 - 6.00%	132	48,553	58.2%	728	1.6	27.0	5.2 %
6.01 - 7.00%	4	2,264	71.1%	758	1.3	20.5	6.3 %
Total	616	\$232,270	57.0%	734	1.5	27.1	