

Ameris Bancorp  
Form 424B4  
June 11, 2012  
**Table of Contents**

**The information in this preliminary prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus is not complete and may be changed. This preliminary prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus are not an offer to sell these securities and are not soliciting an offer to buy these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted.**

**Filed Pursuant to Rule 424(b)(4)  
Registration No. 333-180820**

**Subject to Completion, Dated June 11, 2012**

**PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT**

**(To Prospectus Dated May 3, 2012)**

**52,000 Shares of Fixed Rate Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series A**

**Liquidation Preference Amount \$1,000 Per Share**

This prospectus supplement relates to the offer and sale of 52,000 shares of our Fixed Rate Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series A, \$0.01 par value per share (the Preferred Shares), liquidation preference amount \$1,000 per share, by the United States Department of the Treasury ( Treasury ). We issued the Preferred Shares to Treasury on November 21, 2008 as part of Treasury's Troubled Asset Relief Program Capital Purchase Program (the CPP) in a private placement exempt from the registration requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the Securities Act ).

We will not receive any proceeds from the sale of any Preferred Shares sold by Treasury.

Dividends on the Preferred Shares are payable quarterly in arrears on each February 15, May 15, August 15 and November 15. The initial dividend rate is 5% per annum through February 14, 2014, and will increase to 9% per annum on and after February 15, 2014 if not otherwise redeemed earlier for cash by us. We may redeem the Preferred Shares, at any time, in whole or in part, at our option, subject to prior approval by the appropriate federal banking agency, for cash, for a redemption price equal to 100% of the liquidation preference amount per Preferred Share plus any accrued and unpaid dividends to but excluding the date of redemption.

The Preferred Shares will not be listed for trading on any stock exchange or available for quotation on any national quotation system.

The public offering price and the allocation of the Preferred Shares in this offering will be determined by an auction process. During the auction period, potential bidders will be able to place bids to purchase Preferred Shares at any price at or above the minimum bid price of \$763.50 per share (such bid price to be in increments of \$0.01). The minimum size for any bid will be one Preferred Share. After the auction closes, if Treasury decides to sell any of the offered Preferred Shares, then the underwriters will agree to purchase such Preferred Shares in a firm commitment underwriting and the public offering price of such Preferred Shares will equal the clearing price plus accrued dividends thereon. If bids are received for 100% or more of the offered Preferred Shares, the clearing price will be equal to the highest price at which all of the offered Preferred Shares can be sold in the auction. If bids are received for 100% or more of the offered Preferred Shares, and Treasury elects to sell any Preferred Shares in the auction, Treasury must sell all of the offered Preferred Shares at the clearing price. If bids are received for at least half,

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but less than all, of the offered Preferred Shares, then the clearing price will be equal to the minimum bid price of \$763.50 per share, and Treasury may (but is not required to) sell, at the public offering price, the number of Preferred Shares it chooses to sell up to the number of bids received in the auction, so long as at least half of the offered Preferred Shares are sold. In certain cases, the bids of bidders may be pro-rated. If bids are received for less than half of the offered Preferred Shares, Treasury will not sell any Preferred Shares in this offering. Even if bids are received for at least half of the offered Preferred Shares, Treasury may decide not to sell any Preferred Shares or, in the case where bids are received for at least half, but less than all, of the offered Preferred Shares, may decide to sell a portion (but not less than half) of the offered Preferred Shares in the auction process. The method for submitting bids and a more detailed description of this auction process are described in Auction Process beginning on page S-30 of this prospectus supplement.

**Investing in the Preferred Shares involves risks. You should read the Risk Factors section beginning on page S-8 of this prospectus supplement and page 1 of the accompanying prospectus and in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011 before making a decision to invest in the Preferred Shares.**

|  | Per<br>Share | Total |
|--|--------------|-------|
| Public offering price(1)   | \$           | \$    |
| Underwriting discounts and commissions to be paid by Treasury(2) | \$           | \$    |
| Proceeds to Treasury(1)  | \$           | \$    |

(1) Plus accrued dividends from and including May 15, 2012.

(2) Treasury has agreed to pay all underwriting discounts and commissions and transfer taxes. We have agreed to pay all transaction fees, if any, applicable to the sale of the Preferred Shares and certain fees and disbursements of counsel for Treasury incurred in connection with this offering.

None of the Securities and Exchange Commission (the SEC), the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (the FDIC), the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (the Federal Reserve), any state or other securities commission or any other federal or state bank regulatory agency has approved or disapproved of these securities or passed upon the adequacy or accuracy of this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

**The Preferred Shares are not savings accounts, deposits or other obligations of any bank, thrift or other depository institution and are not insured or guaranteed by the FDIC or any other governmental agency or instrumentality.**

The underwriters expect to deliver the Preferred Shares in book-entry form through the facilities of The Depository Trust Company and its participants against payment on or about \_\_\_\_\_, 2012.

*Joint Book-Running Managers*

**BofA Merrill Lynch**

**Sandler O'Neill + Partners, L.P.**

*Co-Managers*

**C.L. King & Associates    Guzman & Company    Mischler Financial Group, Inc.**

The date of this prospectus supplement is June   , 2012.

**Table of Contents**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Prospectus Supplement**

|   |      |
|---|------|
| <u>ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT</u>   | S-i  |
| <u>SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS</u>                          | S-i  |
| <u>WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION</u>  | S-ii |
| <u>INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION BY REFERENCE</u>                          | S-ii |
| <u>SUMMARY</u>  | S-1  |
| <u>RISK FACTORS</u>   | S-8  |
| <u>USE OF PROCEEDS</u>  | S-23 |
| <u>RATIOS OF EARNINGS TO COMBINED FIXED CHARGES AND PREFERRED STOCK DIVIDENDS</u> | S-23 |
| <u>DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED SHARES</u>  | S-24 |
| <u>AUCTION PROCESS</u>  | S-30 |
| <u>SELLING SHAREHOLDER</u>  | S-36 |
| <u>U.S. FEDERAL INCOME TAX CONSEQUENCES</u>                                       | S-38 |
| <u>UNDERWRITING</u>   | S-43 |
| <u>SUPERVISION AND REGULATION</u>   | S-47 |
| <u>LEGAL MATTERS</u>  | S-47 |
| <u>EXPERTS</u>  | S-47 |

**Prospectus**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <u>ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS</u>   | i  |
| <u>FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS</u>  | i  |
| <u>RISK FACTORS</u>  | 1  |
| <u>USE OF PROCEEDS</u>   | 10 |
| <u>RATIO OF EARNINGS TO COMBINED FIXED CHARGES AND PREFERRED STOCK DIVIDENDS</u> | 10 |
| <u>DESCRIPTION OF SERIES A PREFERRED STOCK</u>                                   | 11 |
| <u>PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION</u>  | 16 |
| <u>SELLING SECURITYHOLDERS</u>   | 18 |
| <u>LEGAL MATTERS</u>   | 19 |
| <u>EXPERTS</u>   | 19 |
| <u>WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION</u>                                       | 19 |
| <u>INFORMATION INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE</u>                                     | 20 |

---

**Table of Contents**

**ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT**

You should read this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the additional information described under the headings "Where You Can Find More Information" and "Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference" before you make a decision to invest in the Preferred Shares. In particular, you should review the information under the heading "Risk Factors" set forth on page S-8 of this prospectus supplement, the information set forth under the heading "Risk Factors" set forth on page 1 in the accompanying prospectus and the information under the heading "Risk Factors" included in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011, which is incorporated by reference herein. You should rely only on the information contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and any related free writing prospectus required to be filed with the SEC. Neither we nor Treasury nor the underwriters are making an offer to sell the Preferred Shares in any manner in which, or in any jurisdiction where, the offer or sale thereof is not permitted. We have not authorized any person to provide you with different or additional information. If any person provides you with different or additional information, you should not rely on it. You should assume that the information in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus, any such free writing prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference herein and therein is accurate only as of its date or the date which is specified in those documents. Our business, financial condition, capital levels, cash flows, liquidity, results of operations and prospects may have changed since any such date.

In this prospectus supplement, Ameris Bancorp, Ameris, the Company, we, our, ours and us refer to Ameris Bancorp, which is a financial holding company headquartered in Moultrie, Georgia, and its subsidiaries on a consolidated basis, unless the context otherwise requires. References to the Bank mean Ameris Bank, which is our principal bank subsidiary.

**SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS**

This prospectus supplement and the documents incorporated by reference herein contain statements that are considered "forward looking statements" within the meaning of United States securities laws. In addition, Ameris and its management may make other written or oral communications from time to time that contain forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements, including statements about industry trends, management's future expectations and other matters that do not relate strictly to historical facts, are based on assumptions by management, and are often identified by such forward-looking terminology as expect, look, believe, anticipate, estimate, seek, may, target and goal or similar statements or variations of such terms. Forward-looking statements may include, among other things, statements about Ameris's confidence in its strategies and its expectations about financial performance, market growth, market and regulatory trends and developments, acquisitions and divestitures, new technologies, services and opportunities and earnings.

Forward-looking statements are subject to various risks and uncertainties, which change over time, are based on management's expectations and assumptions at the time the statements are made, and are not guarantees of future results. Management's expectations and assumptions, and the continued validity of the forward-looking statements, are subject to change due to a broad range of factors affecting the national and global economies, the equity, debt, currency and other financial markets, as well as factors specific to Ameris and its subsidiaries, including the Bank.

Actual outcomes and results may differ materially from what is expressed in our forward-looking statements and from our historical financial results due to the factors discussed elsewhere in this prospectus or disclosed in our other SEC filings. Forward-looking statements should not be relied upon as representing our expectations or beliefs as of any date subsequent to the time this prospectus is filed with the SEC. Ameris undertakes no obligation to revise the forward-looking statements contained in this prospectus to reflect events after the time it is filed with the SEC. The factors discussed herein are not intended to be a complete summary of

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**Table of Contents**

all risks and uncertainties that may affect our businesses. Though we strive to monitor and mitigate risk, we cannot anticipate all potential economic, operational and financial developments that may adversely impact our operations and our financial results.

Forward-looking statements should not be viewed as predictions, and should not be the primary basis upon which investors evaluate Ameris. You should consider all risks and uncertainties disclosed in this prospectus supplement, including the discussion under the section entitled Risk Factors, and in our SEC filings described below under Where You Can Find More Information, all of which are accessible on the SEC's website at <http://www.sec.gov>.

**WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION**

We are subject to the informational requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the Exchange Act), and file with the SEC proxy statements, Annual Reports on Form 10-K, Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and Current Reports on Form 8-K, as required of a U.S. listed company. You may read and copy any document we file at the SEC's public reference room at 100 F Street, NE, Room 1580, Washington, D.C. 20549. Please call the SEC at 1-888-SEC-0330 for further information on the public reference rooms. Our SEC filings are also available to the public from the SEC's web site at [www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov) or on our website at [www.amerisbank.com](http://www.amerisbank.com). However, the information on, or that can be accessible through, our website does not constitute a part of, and is not incorporated by reference in, this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus. Written requests for copies of the documents we file with the SEC should be directed to Ameris Bancorp, 310 First St., SE, Moultrie, Georgia 31768, Attention: Corporate Secretary, telephone (229) 890-1111.

This prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus are part of a registration statement on Form S-3 filed by us with the SEC under the Securities Act. As permitted by the SEC, this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus do not contain all the information in the registration statement filed with the SEC. For a more complete understanding of this offering, you should refer to the complete registration statement, including exhibits, on Form S-3 that may be obtained as described above. Statements contained in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus about the contents of any contract or other document are not necessarily complete. If we have filed any contract or other document as an exhibit to the registration statement or any other document incorporated by reference in the registration statement, you should read the exhibit for a more complete understanding of the contract or other document or matter involved. Each statement regarding a contract or other document is qualified in its entirety by reference to the actual contract or other document.

**INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION BY REFERENCE**

The SEC allows us to incorporate by reference the information that we file with it, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to other documents. The information incorporated by reference is an important part of this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. We incorporate by reference the following documents and any future filings made with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act after the date of this prospectus supplement and prior to the termination of this offering (other than information furnished rather than filed and information that is modified or superseded by subsequently filed documents prior to the termination of this offering):

the Company's Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2011;

the Company's Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended March 31, 2012;

the Company's Current Reports on Form 8-K filed on March 1, 2012 and June 6, 2012;

**Table of Contents**

the Company's Amendment No. 1 on Form 8-K/A filed on May 4, 2012 and Amendment No. 2 on Form 8-K/A filed on June 4, 2012; and

the Company's Definitive Proxy Statement related to its 2012 annual meeting of shareholders, as filed with the SEC on April 19, 2012.

We will provide without charge, upon written or oral request, a copy of any or all of the documents that are incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus and a copy of any or all other contracts or documents which are referred to in this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus. Requests should be directed to Ameris Bancorp, 310 First St., SE, Moultrie, Georgia 31768, Attention: Corporate Secretary, telephone (229) 890-1111.

S-iii

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**Table of Contents**

**SUMMARY**

*This summary highlights selected information contained elsewhere or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus and may not contain all the information that you need to consider in making your investment decision to purchase the Preferred Shares. You should carefully read this entire prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, as well as the information incorporated by reference herein and therein, before deciding whether to invest in the Preferred Shares. You should carefully consider the sections entitled "Risk Factors" in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference herein and therein to determine whether an investment in the Preferred Shares is appropriate for you.*

**The Company**

Ameris Bancorp is a financial holding company whose business is conducted principally through its wholly-owned banking subsidiary, Ameris Bank, which provides a full range of banking services to its retail and commercial customers who are primarily concentrated in select markets in Georgia, Alabama, Florida and South Carolina. Ameris Bancorp was incorporated on December 18, 1980 as a Georgia corporation. Our common stock is traded on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the trading symbol ABCB. We operate 62 domestic banking offices with no foreign activities. At March 31, 2012, we had approximately \$3.04 billion in total assets, \$1.98 billion in total loans, \$2.67 billion in total deposits and stockholders' equity of \$297.7 million.

The Company's executive office is located at 310 First St., S.E., Moultrie, Georgia 31768, our telephone number is (229) 890-1111 and our internet address is [www.amerisbank.com](http://www.amerisbank.com).

**The Offering**

The following summary contains basic information about the Preferred Shares and the auction process and is not intended to be complete and does not contain all the information that is important to you. For a more complete understanding of the Preferred Shares and the auction process, you should read the sections of this prospectus supplement entitled "Description of Preferred Shares" and "Auction Process" and any similar sections in the accompanying prospectus.

**Issuer**

Ameris Bancorp, a Georgia corporation.

**Preferred Shares Offered by Treasury**

52,000 shares of our Fixed Rate Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series A, \$0.01 par value per share. The number of Preferred Shares to be sold will depend on the number of bids received in the auction described below and whether Treasury decides to sell any Preferred Shares in the auction process. See "Auction Process" in this prospectus supplement.

**Liquidation Preference**

If we liquidate, dissolve or wind up (collectively, a "liquidation"), holders of the Preferred Shares will have the right to receive \$1,000 per share, plus any accrued and unpaid dividends (including dividends accrued on any unpaid dividends) to, but not including, the date of payment, before any payments are made to holders of our common stock or any other capital stock that ranks, by its terms, junior as to rights upon liquidation to the Preferred Shares.

**Dividends**

Dividends on the Preferred Shares are payable quarterly in arrears on each February 15, May 15, August 15 and November 15. The initial dividend rate is 5% per annum through February 14, 2014, and will increase to 9% per annum on and after February 15, 2014 if not





**Table of Contents**

otherwise redeemed earlier for cash by us. Holders of Preferred Shares sold by Treasury in the auction, if any, that are record holders on the record date for the August 15, 2012 dividend payment date will be entitled to any declared dividends payable on such date.

**Maturity**

The Preferred Shares have no maturity date.

**Rank**

The Preferred Shares rank (i) senior to common stock or any other capital stock that ranks, by its terms, junior as to dividend rights and/or rights upon liquidation to the Preferred Shares (collectively, the Junior Stock ), (ii) equally with any shares of our capital stock whose terms do not expressly provide that such class or series will rank senior or junior to the Preferred Shares as to dividend rights and/or rights upon liquidation (collectively, the Parity Stock ) and (iii) junior to all of our existing and future indebtedness and any future senior securities, in each case as to dividend rights and/or rights upon liquidation.

**Priority of Dividends**

So long as the Preferred Shares remain outstanding, we may not declare or pay a dividend or other distribution on our common stock or any other shares of Junior Stock (other than dividends payable solely in common stock) or Parity Stock (other than dividends paid on a pro rata basis with the Preferred Shares), and we generally may not directly or indirectly purchase, redeem or otherwise acquire any shares of common stock, Junior Stock or Parity Stock unless all accrued and unpaid dividends on the Preferred Shares for all past dividend periods are paid in full.

**Redemption**

We may redeem the Preferred Shares, at any time, in whole or in part, at our option, subject to prior approval by the appropriate federal banking agency, for a redemption price equal to 100% of the liquidation preference amount per Preferred Share plus any accrued and unpaid dividends (including dividends accrued on any unpaid dividends) to but excluding the date of redemption. We have not applied for such regulatory approval to redeem the Preferred Shares.

**Voting Rights**

Holders of the Preferred Shares generally have no voting rights. However, if we do not pay dividends on the Preferred Shares for six or more quarterly periods, whether or not consecutive, the holders of the Preferred Shares, voting as a single class with the holders of any other Parity Stock upon which like voting rights have been conferred and are exercisable, will be entitled to vote for the election of two additional directors to serve on our board of directors until all accrued and unpaid dividends (including dividends accrued on any unpaid dividends) on the Preferred Shares are paid in full.

In addition, the affirmative vote of the holders of at least 66-2/3% of the outstanding Preferred Shares is required for us to authorize, create or increase the authorized number of shares of our capital stock ranking, as to dividends or amounts payable upon liquidation, senior to the Preferred Shares, to amend, alter or repeal any provision of our

**Table of Contents**

charter or the Articles of Amendment with respect to the Preferred Shares in a manner that adversely affects the rights of the holders of the Preferred Shares or to consummate a binding share exchange or reclassification of the Preferred Shares or a merger or consolidation of us with another entity unless (x) the Preferred Shares remain outstanding or are converted into or exchanged for preference shares of the surviving entity or its ultimate parent and (y) the Preferred Shares remain outstanding or such preference shares have such terms that are not materially less favorable, taken as a whole, than the rights of the Preferred Shares immediately prior to such transaction, taken as a whole.

**Auction Process**

The public offering price and the allocation of the Preferred Shares in this offering will be determined through an auction process conducted by Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated and Sandler O'Neill & Partners, L.P., the joint book-running managers in this offering, in their capacity as the auction agents. The auction process will entail a modified Dutch auction mechanic in which bids may be submitted through the auction agents or one of the other brokers that is a member of the broker network, which are collectively referred to in this prospectus supplement as the network brokers, established in connection with the auction process. Each broker will make suitability determinations with respect to its own customers wishing to participate in the auction process. The auction agents will not provide bidders with any information about the bids of other bidders or auction trends, or with advice regarding bidding strategies, in connection with the auction process. We encourage you to discuss any questions regarding the bidding process and suitability determinations applicable to your bids with your broker. We do not intend to submit any bids in the auction. For more information about the auction process, see Auction Process in this prospectus supplement.

**Minimum Bid Size and Price Increments**

This offering is being conducted using an auction process in which prospective purchasers are required to bid for the Preferred Shares. During the auction period, bids may be placed for Preferred Shares at any price at or above the minimum bid price of \$763.50 per share (such bid price to be in increments of \$0.01) with a minimum bid size of one Preferred Share. See Auction Process in this prospectus supplement.

**Bid Submission Deadline**

The auction will commence at 8:30 a.m., New York City time, on the date specified by the auction agents in a press release issued prior to the opening of the equity markets on such day, and will close at 6:30 p.m., New York City time, on the second business day immediately thereafter, which is referred to as the submission deadline.

**Irrevocability of Bids**

Bids that have not been modified or withdrawn by the time of the submission deadline are final and irrevocable, and bidders who

**Table of Contents**

submit bids that are accepted by Treasury will be obligated to purchase the Preferred Shares allocated to them. The auction agents are under no obligation to reconfirm bids for any reason, except as may be required by applicable securities laws; however, the auction agents, in their sole discretion, may require that bidders confirm their bids before the auction process closes. See [Auction Process](#) in this prospectus supplement.

**Clearing Price**

The price at which the Preferred Shares will be sold to the public will be the clearing price plus accrued dividends thereon. The clearing price will be determined as follows:

If valid, irrevocable bids are received for 100% or more of the offered Preferred Shares at the submission deadline, the clearing price will be equal to the highest price at which all of the offered Preferred Shares can be sold in the auction;

If valid, irrevocable bids are received for at least half, but less than all, of the offered Preferred Shares at the time of the submission deadline, the clearing price will be equal to the minimum bid price of \$763.50 per share.

Even if bids are received for at least half of the offered Preferred Shares, Treasury may decide not to sell any Preferred Shares in the auction process or, in the case where bids are received for at least half, but less than all, of the Preferred Shares, may decide only to sell a portion (but not less than half) of the offered Preferred Shares in the auction process. If Treasury decides to sell Preferred Shares in the auction, after Treasury confirms its acceptance of the clearing price and the number of Preferred Shares to be sold, the auction agents and each network broker that has submitted a successful bid will notify successful bidders that the auction has closed and that their bids have been accepted by Treasury (subject, in some cases, to pro-ration, as described below). The clearing price and number of Preferred Shares to be sold are also expected to be announced by press release on the business day following the end of the auction. See [Auction Process](#) in this prospectus supplement.

**Number of Preferred Shares to be Sold**

If bids are received for 100% or more of the offered Preferred Shares, Treasury must sell all of the offered Preferred Shares if it chooses to sell any Preferred Shares. If bids are received for at least half, but less than all, of the offered Preferred Shares, then Treasury may, but is not required to, sell at the minimum bid price in the auction (which will be deemed to be the clearing price) the number of Preferred Shares it chooses to sell up to the number of bids received in the auction, so long as at least half of the offered Preferred Shares are sold. If bids are received for less than half of the offered Preferred Shares, Treasury will not sell any Preferred Shares in this offering. Even if bids are received for at least half of the offered Preferred Shares, Treasury may decide not to sell any Preferred Shares or, in the case

## **Table of Contents**

where bids are received for at least half, but less than all, of the offered Preferred Shares, may decide only to sell a portion (but not less than half) of the offered Preferred Shares in the auction process. If Treasury elects to sell any Preferred Shares in the auction, Treasury must sell those shares at the clearing price plus accrued dividends thereon. In no event will Treasury sell more Preferred Shares than the number of Preferred Shares for which there are bids. See **Auction Process** in this prospectus supplement.

### **Allocation; Pro-Ration**

If bids for 100% or more of the offered Preferred Shares are received and Treasury elects to sell Preferred Shares in the offering, then any accepted bids submitted in the auction above the clearing price will receive allocations in full, while any accepted bids submitted at the clearing price may experience pro-rata allocation. If bids for at least half, but less than all, of the offered Preferred Shares are received, and Treasury chooses to sell fewer Preferred Shares than the number of Preferred Shares for which bids were received, then all bids will experience equal pro-rata allocation. See **Auction Process** in this prospectus supplement.

### **Use of Proceeds**

We will not receive any proceeds from the sale of any Preferred Shares sold by Treasury. See **Use of Proceeds** in this prospectus supplement.

### **Listing**

The Preferred Shares will not be listed for trading on any stock exchange nor will they be available for quotation on any national quotation system.

### **Risk Factors**

See **Risk Factors** and other information included or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus for a discussion of factors you should consider carefully before making a decision to invest in the Preferred Shares.

### **Auction Agents**

Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated and Sandler O'Neill & Partners, L.P.

### **Network Brokers**

See pages S-31 and S-32 of this prospectus supplement for a list of brokers participating as network brokers in the auction process.

**Table of Contents****Selected Financial Data**

The following tables set forth selected financial data for us for the three months ended March 31, 2012 and 2011 and for each of the years in the five-year period ended December 31, 2011. The selected income statement data for the three months ended March 31, 2012 and the selected balance sheet data as of March 31, 2012 have been derived from our unaudited financial statements included in our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended March 31, 2012, which is incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement. Results for the three months ended March 31, 2012 are not necessarily indicative of results for any other interim period or for the year as a whole. The selected income statement data for the years ended December 31, 2011, 2010 and 2009 and the selected balance sheet data as of December 31, 2011 and 2010 have been derived from our audited financial statements included in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011, which is incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement. The selected income statement data for the years ended December 31, 2008 and 2007 and the selected balance sheet data as of December 31, 2009, 2008 and 2007 have been derived from our audited financial statements that are not included in this prospectus supplement. You should read the following summary selected consolidated financial data with our consolidated financial statements and notes appearing in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011, which is incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement. Historical results are not necessarily indicative of future results.

|  | Three Months<br>Ended<br>March 31, |              | Year Ended December 31, |              |              |              |              |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|  | 2012                               | 2011         | 2011                    | 2010         | 2009         | 2008         | 2007         |
| <b>(Dollars in Thousands, Except Per Share Data)</b> |                                    |              |                         |              |              |              |              |
| <b>Selected Balance Sheet Data:</b>                  |                                    |              |                         |              |              |              |              |
| Total assets   | \$ 3,043,234                       | \$ 2,918,423 | \$ 2,994,308            | \$ 2,972,168 | \$ 2,423,970 | \$ 2,407,090 | \$ 2,112,063 |
| Total loans, gross                                   | 1,323,844                          | 1,871,993    | 1,332,086               | 1,374,757    | 1,584,359    | 1,695,777    | 1,614,048    |
| Covered assets (loans and OREO)                      | 739,180                            | 585,769      | 650,106                 | 609,922      | 146,585      |              |              |
| Investment securities available for sale             | 371,791                            | 305,620      | 339,967                 | 322,581      | 245,556      | 367,894      | 289,382      |
| FDIC loss-share receivable                           | 220,016                            | 167,176      | 242,394                 | 177,187      | 45,840       |              |              |
| Total deposits                                       | 2,665,360                          | 2,572,689    | 2,591,566               | 2,535,426    | 2,123,116    | 2,013,525    | 1,757,265    |
| Stockholders' equity                                 | 297,697                            | 273,857      | 293,770                 | 273,407      | 194,964      | 239,359      | 191,249      |
| <b>Selected Income Statement Data:</b>               |                                    |              |                         |              |              |              |              |
| Interest income                                      | \$ 32,282                          | 32,137       | \$ 141,071              | \$ 119,071   | \$ 114,573   | \$ 129,008   | \$ 146,077   |
| Interest expense                                     | 4,555                              | 7,930        | 27,547                  | 29,794       | 40,550       | 56,343       | 70,999       |
| Net interest income                                  | 27,727                             | 24,207       | 113,524                 | 89,277       | 74,023       | 72,665       | 75,078       |
| Provision for loan losses                            | 12,882                             | 7,043        | 32,729                  | 50,521       | 42,068       | 35,030       | 11,321       |
| Other income   | 27,264                             | 6,193        | 52,807                  | 35,248       | 58,353       | 19,149       | 17,592       |
| Other expenses                                       | 34,246                             | 21,155       | 101,953                 | 81,188       | 124,800      | 62,753       | 58,896       |
| Income/(loss) before income taxes                    | 7,863                              | 2,202        | 31,649                  | (7,184)      | (34,492)     | (5,969)      | 22,453       |
| Income tax expense/(benefit)                         | 2,498                              | 824          | 10,556                  | (3,195)      | 7,297        | (2,053)      | 7,300        |
| Net income/(loss)                                    | 5,365                              | 1,378        | \$ 21,093               | \$ (3,989)   | \$ (41,789)  | \$ (3,916)   | \$ 15,153    |
| Preferred stock dividends                            | 815                                | 798          | 3,241                   | 3,213        | 3,161        | 328          |              |
| Net income/(loss) available to common shareholders   | \$ 4,550                           | 580          | \$ 17,852               | \$ (7,202)   | \$ (44,950)  | \$ (4,244)   | \$ 15,153    |
| <b>Per Share Data:</b>                               |                                    |              |                         |              |              |              |              |
| Net income/(loss) basic                              | \$ 0.19                            | \$ 0.02      | \$ 0.76                 | \$ (0.35)    | \$ (3.27)    | \$ (0.31)    | \$ 1.12      |
| Net income/(loss) diluted                            | 0.19                               | 0.02         | 0.76                    | (0.35)       | (3.27)       | (0.31)       | 1.11         |
| Common book value                                    | 10.36                              | 9.41         | 10.23                   | 9.44         | 10.52        | 14.06        | 14.12        |
| Common dividends - cash                              |                                    |              |                         |              | .10          | 0.38         | 0.56         |
| Common dividends - stock                             |                                    |              |                         | 3 for 157    | 2 for 130    |              |              |

**Table of Contents**

|   | Three Months                                  |        | Year Ended December 31, |         |         |         |        |
|---|---|--------|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
|   | 2012  | 2011   | 2011                    | 2010    | 2009    | 2008    | 2007   |
|   | (Dollars in Thousands, Except Per Share Data) |        |                         |         |         |         |        |
| <b>Profitability Ratios:</b>                            |   |        |                         |         |         |         |        |
| Net income (loss) to average total assets               | 0.72%   | 0.18%  | 0.60%                   | (0.37)% | (0.52)% | (0.19)% | 0.74%  |
| Net income (loss) to average common stockholders equity | 8.89  | 2.38   | 7.21                    | (4.44)  | (6.25)  | (2.22)  | 8.13   |
| Net interest margin                                     | 4.48  | 4.04   | 4.57                    | 4.11    | 3.52    | 3.65    | 4.02   |
| Efficiency ratio  | 62.28   | 69.59  | 61.30                   | 65.20   | 74.61   | 68.35   | 63.55  |
| <b>Loan Quality Ratios:</b>                             |   |        |                         |         |         |         |        |
| Net charge-offs to average loans*                       | 5.79  | 1.88%  | 2.23%                   | 3.33%   | 2.77%   | 1.36%   | 0.53%  |
| Allowance for loan losses to total loans *              | 2.17  | 2.63   | 2.64                    | 2.52    | 2.26    | 2.33    | 1.71   |
| Nonperforming assets to total loans and OREO*           | 6.77  | 9.27   | 8.76                    | 8.38    | 6.87    | 4.13    | 1.60   |
| <b>Liquidity Ratios:</b>                                |   |        |                         |         |         |         |        |
| Loans to total deposits*                                | 49.67   | 52.31% | 51.40%                  | 54.22%  | 74.62%  | 84.22%  | 91.85% |
| Average loans to average earnings assets                | 77.82   | 77.54  | 76.72                   | 76.50   | 79.26   | 82.32   | 81.72  |
| Noninterest-bearing deposits to total deposits          | 16.68   | 12.29  | 15.26                   | 11.91   | 11.16   | 10.36   | 9.36   |
| <b>Capital Adequacy Ratios:</b>                         |   |        |                         |         |         |         |        |
| Stockholders' equity to total assets                    | 9.78  | 9.38%  | 9.81%                   | 9.20%   | 8.04%   | 7.91%   | 9.06%  |
| Common stock dividend payout ratio                      |   |        | NM                      | NM      | NM      | NM      | 50.00  |

\* Excludes covered assets.

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**Table of Contents**

**RISK FACTORS**

*An investment in our Preferred Shares is subject to risks inherent in our business, risks relating to the structure of the Preferred Shares and risks relating to the auction process being conducted as part of this offering. The material risks and uncertainties that management believes affect your investment in the Preferred Shares are described below and in the sections entitled "Risk Factors" in the accompanying prospectus and our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011 incorporated by reference herein. Before making an investment decision, you should carefully consider the risks and uncertainties described below and in the accompanying prospectus and information included or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. If any of these risks or uncertainties are realized, our business, financial condition, capital levels, cash flows, liquidity, results of operations and prospects, as well as our ability to pay dividends on the Preferred Shares, could be materially and adversely affected, the market price of the Preferred Shares could decline significantly and you could lose some or all of your investment. We refer to any effect contemplated in the immediately preceding sentence, collectively, as a material adverse effect on us or similar language.*

**Risk Factors Related to our Business**

*Difficult market conditions have adversely affected the industry in which we operate.*

The capital and credit markets have been experiencing volatility and disruption for approximately four years. Declines in the housing market over this period, with falling home prices and increasing foreclosures, unemployment and under-employment, have negatively impacted the credit performance of mortgage loans and resulted in significant write-downs of asset values by financial institutions, including government-sponsored entities, as well as major commercial and investment banks. As a result of the broad based economic decline and the troubled economic conditions, financial institutions have pursued strategies that include seeking additional capital or merging with larger and stronger institutions. In some cases, financial institutions that did not pursue defensive strategies or did not succeed in those strategies, have failed. Reflecting concern about the stability of the financial markets generally and the strength of counterparties, many lenders and institutional investors have reduced or ceased providing funding to borrowers, including to other financial institutions. Additionally, the market disruptions have increased the level of commercial and consumer delinquencies, lack of consumer confidence, increased market volatility and widespread reduction of business activity generally. We do not expect that the difficult conditions in the financial markets are likely to improve materially in the near future, and we are managing Ameris with numerous defensive strategies. A worsening of the current conditions would exacerbate the adverse effects of these difficult market conditions on us and others in the financial institution industry. In particular, we may face the following risks in connection with these events:

Unreliable market conditions with significantly reduced real estate activity may adversely affect our ability to determine the fair value of the assets we hold. If we determine that a significant portion of our assets have values that are significantly below their recorded carrying value, we could recognize a material charge to earnings in the quarter during which such determination was made, our capital ratios would be affected and may result in increased regulatory scrutiny.

We may expect to face increased regulation of our industry, including as a result of the Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 or the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (the "Dodd-Frank Act"). Compliance with such regulation may increase our costs and limit our ability to pursue business opportunities.

Market developments and the resulting economic pressure on consumers may affect consumer confidence levels and may cause increases in delinquencies and default rates, which, among other effects, could affect our charge-offs and provision for loan losses.



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**Table of Contents**

Competition in the industry could intensify as a result of the increasing consolidation of financial services companies in connection with current market conditions.

***Recent legislation and regulatory proposals in response to recent turmoil in the financial markets may materially adversely affect our business and results of operations.***

The banking industry is heavily regulated. We are subject to examinations, supervision and comprehensive regulation by various federal and state agencies. Our compliance with these regulations is costly and restricts certain of our activities. Banking regulations are primarily intended to protect the federal deposit insurance fund and depositors, not shareholders. The burden imposed by federal and state regulations puts banks at a competitive disadvantage compared to less regulated competitors such as finance companies, mortgage banking companies and leasing companies. Changes in the laws, regulations and regulatory practices affecting the banking industry may increase our costs of doing business or otherwise adversely affect us and create competitive advantages for others. Federal economic and monetary policies may also affect our ability to attract deposits and other funding sources, make loans and investments and achieve satisfactory interest spreads.

The Dodd-Frank Act represents a significant overhaul of many aspects of the regulation of the financial-services industry, including new or revised regulation of such things as systemic risk, capital adequacy, deposit insurance assessments and consumer financial protection. In addition, the federal banking regulators have issued joint guidance on incentive compensation and Treasury and the federal banking regulators have issued statements calling for higher capital and liquidity requirements for banking organizations. Complying with these and other new legislative or regulatory requirements, and any programs established thereunder, could have a material adverse impact on our results of operations, our financial condition and our ability to fill positions with the most qualified candidates available.

***Our revenues are highly correlated to market interest rates.***

Our assets and liabilities are primarily monetary in nature, and as a result, we are subject to significant risks tied to changes in interest rates. Our ability to operate profitably is largely dependent upon net interest income. In 2011, net interest income made up 81.5% of our recurring revenue. Unexpected movement in interest rates, that may or may not change the slope of the current yield curve, could cause our net interest margins to decrease, subsequently decreasing net interest income. In addition, such changes could materially adversely affect the valuation of our assets and liabilities.

At present our one-year interest rate sensitivity position is mildly liability sensitive, such that a gradual increase in interest rates during the next twelve months should have a slightly negative impact on net interest income during that period. However, as with most financial institutions, our results of operations are affected by changes in interest rates and our ability to manage this risk. The difference between interest rates charged on interest-earning assets and interest rates paid on interest-bearing liabilities may be affected by changes in market interest rates, changes in relationships between interest rate indices, and changes in the relationships between long-term and short-term market interest rates. In addition, the mix of assets and liabilities could change as varying levels of market interest rates might present our customer base with more attractive options.

***Certain changes in interest rates, inflation, deflation or the financial markets could affect demand for our products and our ability to deliver products efficiently.***

Loan originations, and potentially loan revenues, could be materially adversely impacted by sharply rising interest rates. Conversely, sharply falling rates could increase prepayments within our securities portfolio lowering interest earnings from those investments. An unanticipated increase in inflation could cause our operating costs related to salaries and benefits, technology and supplies to increase at a faster pace than revenues.

The fair market value of our securities portfolio and the investment income from these securities also fluctuate depending on general economic and market conditions. In addition, actual net investment income and/or cash flows from investments that carry prepayment risk, such as mortgage-backed and other asset-backed securities, may differ from those anticipated at the time of investment as a result of interest rate fluctuations.

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**Table of Contents**

***The downgrade of the U.S. credit rating and Europe's debt crisis could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and liquidity.***

Standard & Poor's lowered its long term sovereign credit rating on the United States of America from AAA to AA+ on August 5, 2011. A further downgrade or a downgrade by other rating agencies could have a material adverse impact on financial markets and economic conditions in the United States and worldwide. Any such adverse impact could have a material adverse effect on our liquidity, financial condition and results of operations.

In addition, the possibility that certain European Union member states will default on their debt obligations has negatively impacted economic conditions and global markets. The continued uncertainty over the outcome of international and the European Union's financial support programs and the possibility that other European Union member states may experience similar financial troubles could further disrupt global markets. The negative impact on economic conditions and global markets could also have a material adverse effect on our liquidity, financial condition and results of operations.

***Our concentration of real estate loans subjects us to risks that could materially adversely affect our results of operations and financial condition.***

The majority of our loan portfolio is secured by real estate. As the economy has deteriorated and depressed real estate values, the collateral value of the portfolio and the revenue stream from those loans has come under stress and has required additional provision to the allowance for loan losses. Our ability to dispose of foreclosed real estate and resolve credit quality issues is dependent on real estate activity and real estate prices, both of which have been unpredictable for more than four years.

***Greater loan losses than expected may materially adversely affect our earnings.***

We, as lenders, are exposed to the risk that our customers will be unable to repay their loans in accordance with their terms and that any collateral securing the payment of their loans may not be sufficient to assure repayment. Credit losses are inherent in the business of making loans and could have a material adverse effect on our operating results. Our credit risk with respect to our real estate and construction loan portfolio will relate principally to the creditworthiness of business entities and the value of the real estate serving as security for the repayment of loans. Our credit risk with respect to our commercial and consumer loan portfolio will relate principally to the general creditworthiness of businesses and individuals within our local markets.

We make various assumptions and judgments about the collectability of our loan portfolio and provide an allowance for estimated loan losses based on a number of factors. We believe that our current allowance for loan losses is adequate. However, if our assumptions or judgments prove to be incorrect, the allowance for loan losses may not be sufficient to cover actual loan losses. We may have to increase our allowance in the future in response to the request of one of our primary banking regulators, to adjust for changing conditions and assumptions, or as a result of any deterioration in the quality of our loan portfolio. The actual amount of future provisions for loan losses cannot be determined at this time and may vary from the amounts of past provisions.

***Our business is highly correlated to local economic conditions in a geographically concentrated part of the United States.***

Unlike larger organizations that are more geographically diversified, our banking offices are primarily concentrated in select markets in Georgia, Alabama, Florida and South Carolina. As a result of this geographic concentration, our financial results depend largely upon economic conditions in these market areas. Deterioration in economic conditions in the markets we serve could result in one or more of the following:

an increase in loan delinquencies;

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**Table of Contents**

an increase in problem assets and foreclosures;

a decrease in the demand for our products and services; and

a decrease in the value of collateral for loans, especially real estate, in turn reducing customers' borrowing power, the value of assets associated with problem loans and collateral coverage.

***Our growth and financial performance may be negatively impacted if we are unable to successfully execute our growth plans.***

Economic conditions and other factors, such as our ability to identify appropriate markets for expansion, our ability to recruit and retain qualified personnel, our ability to fund earning asset growth at a reasonable and profitable level, sufficient capital to support our growth initiatives, competitive factors and banking laws, will impact our success.

We may seek to supplement our internal growth through acquisitions. We cannot predict with certainty the number, size or timing of acquisitions, or whether any such acquisition will occur at all. Our acquisition efforts have traditionally focused on targeted banking entities in markets in which we currently operate and markets in which we believe we can compete effectively. However, as consolidation of the financial services industry continues, the competition for suitable acquisition candidates may increase. We may compete with other financial services companies for acquisition opportunities, and many of these competitors have greater financial resources than we do and may be able to pay more for an acquisition than we are able or willing to pay. We also may need additional debt or equity financing in the future to fund acquisitions. We may not be able to obtain additional financing or, if available, it may not be in amounts and on terms acceptable to us. If we are unable to locate suitable acquisition candidates willing to sell on terms acceptable to us, or we are otherwise unable to obtain additional debt or equity financing necessary for us to continue making acquisitions, we would be required to find other methods to grow our business and we may not grow at the same rate we have in the past, or at all.

Generally, we must receive federal regulatory approval before we can acquire a bank or bank holding company. In determining whether to approve a proposed bank acquisition, federal bank regulators will consider, among other factors, the effect of the acquisition on the competition, financial condition and future prospects. The regulators also review current and projected capital ratios and levels, the competence, experience and integrity of management and its record of compliance with laws and regulations, the convenience and needs of the communities to be served (including the acquiring institution's record of compliance under the Community Reinvestment Act) and the effectiveness of the acquiring institution in combating money laundering activities. We cannot be certain when or if, or on what terms and conditions, any required regulatory approvals will be granted. We may also be required to sell banks or branches as a condition to receiving regulatory approval, which condition may not be acceptable to us or, if acceptable to us, may reduce the benefit of any acquisition.

In the past, we have utilized de novo branching in new and existing markets as a way to supplement our growth. De novo branching and any acquisition carry with it numerous risks, including the following:

the inability to obtain all required regulatory approvals;

significant costs and anticipated operating losses associated with establishing a de novo branch or a new bank;

the inability to secure the services of qualified senior management;

the local market may not accept the services of a new bank owned and managed by a bank holding company headquartered outside of the market area of the new bank;

**Table of Contents**

economic downturns in the new market;

the inability to obtain attractive locations within a new market at a reasonable cost; and

the additional strain on management resources and internal systems and controls.

We have experienced to some extent many of these risks with our de novo branching to date.

***We rely on dividends from the Bank for most of our revenue.***

Ameris is a separate and distinct legal entity from its subsidiaries. It receives substantially all of its revenue from dividends from the Bank. These dividends are the principal source of funds to pay dividends on our common stock and interest and principal on our debt. Various federal and state laws and regulations limit the amount of dividends that the Bank may pay to us. Also, our right to participate in a distribution of assets upon a subsidiary's liquidation or reorganization is subject to the prior claims of the subsidiary's creditors. In the event the Bank is unable to pay dividends to us, we may not be able to service debt, pay obligations or pay dividends on our common stock and its business, financial condition and results of operations may be materially adversely affected. Consequently, cash-based activities, including further investments in or support of, the Bank could require borrowings or additional issuances of common or preferred stock.

***We are subject to regulation by various federal and state entities.***

We are subject to the regulations of the SEC, the Federal Reserve, the FDIC and the Georgia Department of Banking and Finance. New regulations issued by these agencies may adversely affect our ability to carry on our business activities. We are subject to various federal and state laws and certain changes in these laws and regulations may adversely affect our operations. Noncompliance with certain of these regulations may impact our business plans, including our ability to branch, offer certain products or execute existing or planned business strategies.

We are also subject to the accounting rules and regulations of the SEC and the Financial Accounting Standards Board. Changes in accounting rules could materially adversely affect the reported financial statements or our results of operations and may also require extraordinary efforts or additional costs to implement. Any of these laws or regulations may be modified or changed from time to time, and we cannot be assured that such modifications or changes will not adversely affect us.

***We are subject to industry competition which may have an impact upon our success.***

Our profitability depends on our ability to compete successfully. We operate in a highly competitive financial services environment. Certain competitors are larger and may have more resources than we do. We face competition in our regional market areas from other commercial banks, savings and loan associations, credit unions, internet banks, finance companies, mutual funds, insurance companies, brokerage and investment banking firms, and other financial intermediaries that offer similar services. Some of our nonbank competitors are not subject to the same extensive regulations that govern us or our bank subsidiary and may have greater flexibility in competing for business.

Another competitive factor is that the financial services market, including banking services, is undergoing rapid changes with frequent introductions of new technology-driven products and services. Our future success may depend, in part, on our ability to use technology competitively to provide products and services that provide convenience to customers and create additional efficiencies in our operations.

***Changes in the policies of monetary authorities and other government action could materially adversely affect our profitability.***

The results of our operations are affected by credit policies of monetary authorities, particularly the Federal Reserve. The instruments of monetary policy employed by the Federal Reserve include open market

## **Table of Contents**

operations in U.S. government securities, changes in the discount rate or the federal funds rate on bank borrowings and changes in reserve requirements against bank deposits. In view of changing conditions in the national economy and in the money markets, particularly in light of the continuing threat of terrorist attacks and current U.S. military operations and other instances of unrest around the world, we cannot predict with certainty possible future changes in interest rates, deposit levels, loan demand or our business and earnings. Furthermore, the actions of the U.S. government and other governments in responding to such terrorist attacks or instances of unrest may result in currency fluctuations, exchange controls, market disruption and other adverse effects.

### ***We may need to rely on the financial markets to provide needed capital.***

Our common stock is listed and traded on the NASDAQ Global Select Market. Although we anticipate that our capital resources will be adequate for the foreseeable future to meet our capital requirements, at times we may depend on the liquidity of the NASDAQ Global Select Market to raise equity capital. If the market should fail to operate, or if conditions in the capital markets are adverse, we may be constrained in raising capital. Downgrades in the opinions of the analysts that follow us may cause our stock price to fall and significantly limit our ability to access the markets for additional capital requirements. Should these risks materialize, our ability to further expand our operations through internal growth or acquisition may be limited.

### ***We may invest or spend the proceeds of stock offerings in ways with which you may not agree and in ways that may not earn a profit.***

We may choose to use the proceeds of future stock offerings for general corporate purposes, including for possible acquisition opportunities that may become available, such as future FDIC-assisted transactions. It is not known whether suitable acquisition opportunities may become available or whether we will be able to successfully complete any such acquisitions. We may use the proceeds of an offering only to focus on sustaining our organic, or internal, growth or for other purposes. In addition, we may use all or a portion of the proceeds of an offering to support our capital. You may not agree with the ways we decide to use the proceeds of any stock offerings, and our use of the proceeds may not yield any profits.

### ***We face risks related to our operational, technological and organizational infrastructure.***

Our ability to grow and compete is dependent on our ability to build or acquire the necessary operational and technological infrastructure and to manage the cost of that infrastructure while we expand. Similar to other large corporations, in our case, operational risk can manifest itself in many ways, such as errors related to failed or inadequate processes, faulty or disabled computer systems, fraud by employees or persons outside of Ameris and exposure to external events. We are dependent on our operational infrastructure to help manage these risks. In addition, we are heavily dependent on the strength and capability of our technology systems which we use both to interface with our customers and to manage our internal financial and other systems. Our ability to develop and deliver new products that meet the needs of our existing customers and attract new customers depends in part on the functionality of our technology systems. Additionally, our ability to run our business in compliance with applicable laws and regulations is dependent on these infrastructures.

We continuously monitor our operational and technological capabilities and make modifications and improvements when we believe it will be cost effective to do so. In some instances, we may build and maintain these capabilities ourselves. We also outsource some of these functions to third parties. These third parties may experience errors or disruptions that could adversely impact us and over which we may have limited control. We also face risk from the integration of new infrastructure platforms and/or new third party providers of such platforms into our existing businesses.

### ***Financial services companies depend on the accuracy and completeness of information about customers and counterparties.***

In deciding whether to extend credit or enter into other transactions, we may rely on information furnished by or on behalf of customers and counterparties, including financial statements, credit reports and other

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**Table of Contents**

financial information. We may also rely on representations of those customers, counterparties or other third parties, such as independent auditors, as to the accuracy and completeness of that information. Reliance on inaccurate or misleading financial statements, credit reports or other financial information could have a material adverse impact on our business and, in turn, our financial condition and results of operations.

***Reputational risk and social factors may impact our results.***

Our ability to originate and maintain accounts is highly dependent upon customer and other external perceptions of our business practices and our financial health. Adverse perceptions regarding our business practices or our financial health could damage our reputation in both the customer and funding markets, leading to difficulties in generating and maintaining accounts as well as in financing them. Adverse developments with respect to the consumer or other external perceptions regarding the practices of our competitors, or our industry as a whole, may also adversely impact our reputation. In addition, adverse reputational impacts on third parties with whom we have important relationships may also adversely impact our reputation. Adverse impacts on our reputation, or the reputation of our industry, may also result in greater regulatory or legislative scrutiny, which may lead to laws, regulations or regulatory actions that may change or constrain the manner in which we engage with our customers and the products we offer. Adverse reputational impacts or events may also increase our litigation risk. We carefully monitor internal and external developments for areas of potential reputational risk and have established governance structures to assist in evaluating such risks in our business practices and decisions.

***We may not be able to attract and retain skilled people.***

Our success depends, in large part, on its ability to attract and retain key people. Competition for the best people in most activities engaged in by us can be intense and we may not be able to hire people or to retain them. The unexpected loss of services of one or more of our key personnel could have a material adverse impact on our business because of their skills, knowledge of our market, years of industry experience and the difficulty of promptly finding qualified replacement personnel.

***The FDIC has imposed a special assessment on all FDIC-insured institutions, which decreased our earnings in 2009, and future special assessments could materially adversely affect our earnings in future periods.***

In May 2009, the FDIC announced that it had voted to levy a special assessment on insured institutions in order to facilitate the rebuilding of the Deposit Insurance Fund. During 2009, we were required to pay a special assessment totaling \$1.1 million and also to prepay the assessments that would normally have been paid during 2010-2012. The FDIC has indicated that future special assessments are possible, although it has not determined the magnitude or timing of any future assessments. Any such future assessments will decrease our earnings.

***The terms governing the issuance of the Preferred Shares to Treasury may be changed, the effect of which may have an adverse effect on our operations.***

The terms of the Securities Purchase Agreement – Standard Terms incorporated by reference therein, which we entered into with Treasury in connection with its purchase of the Preferred Shares, provides that Treasury may unilaterally amend any provision of the agreement to the extent required to comply with any changes in applicable federal law that may occur in the future. We have no control over any change in the terms of the transaction that may occur in the future. Such changes may place restrictions on our business or results of operation, which may adversely affect the market price of our common stock.

***We are subject to certain risks related to FDIC-assisted transactions.***

The success of past FDIC-assisted transactions and any FDIC-assisted transaction in which we may participate in the future will depend on a number of factors, including, but not limited to, the following:

our ability to fully integrate, and to integrate successfully, the branches acquired into the Bank's operations;

**Table of Contents**

our ability to limit the outflow of deposits held by our new customers in the acquired branches and to successfully retain and manage interest-earning assets (loans) acquired in FDIC-assisted transactions;

our ability to retain existing deposits and to generate new interest-earning assets in the geographic areas previously served by the acquired banks;

our ability to effectively compete in new markets in which we did not previously have a presence;

our success in deploying the cash received in the FDIC-assisted transactions into assets bearing sufficiently high yields without incurring unacceptable credit or interest rate risk;

our ability to control the incremental non-interest expense from the acquired branches in a manner that enables us to maintain a favorable overall efficiency ratio;

our ability to retain and attract the appropriate personnel to staff the acquired branches; and

our ability to earn acceptable levels of interest and non-interest income, including fee income, from the acquired branches.

As with any acquisition involving a financial institution, particularly one involving the transfer of a large number of bank branches as is often the case with FDIC-assisted transactions, there may be higher than average levels of service disruptions that would cause inconveniences or potentially increase the effectiveness of competing financial institutions in attracting our customers. Integrating the acquired branches would not be an operation of substantial size and expense that Ameris is not familiar with, but we anticipate unique challenges and opportunities because of the nature of the transaction. Integration efforts will also likely divert our management's attention and resources. It is not known whether we will be able to integrate acquired branches successfully, and the integration process could result in the loss of key employees, the disruption of ongoing business or inconsistencies in standards, controls, procedures and policies that adversely affect our ability to maintain relationships with clients, customers, depositors and employees or to achieve the anticipated benefits of the FDIC-assisted transactions. We may also encounter unexpected difficulties or costs during the integration that could materially adversely affect our earnings and financial condition, perhaps materially. Additionally, we may be unable to achieve results in the future similar to those achieved by our existing banking business, to compete effectively in the market areas previously served by the acquired branches or to manage any growth resulting from FDIC-assisted transactions effectively.

Our willingness and ability to grow the acquired branches following FDIC-assisted transactions depend on several factors, most importantly the ability to retain certain key personnel that we hire or transfer in connection with such transactions. Our failure to retain these employees could adversely affect the success of such transactions and our future growth.

***We engage in acquisitions of other businesses from time to time, including FDIC-assisted acquisitions. These acquisitions may not produce revenue or earnings enhancements or cost savings at levels or within timeframes originally anticipated and may result in unforeseen integration difficulties.***

When appropriate opportunities arise, we will engage in acquisitions of other businesses. Difficulty in integrating an acquired business or company may cause us not to realize expected revenue increases, cost savings, increases in geographic or product presence or other anticipated benefits from any acquisition. The integration could result in higher than expected deposit attrition (run-off), loss of key employees, disruption of our business or the business of the acquired company, or otherwise adversely affect our ability to maintain relationships with customers and employees or achieve the anticipated benefits of the acquisition. We are likely to need to make additional investment in equipment and personnel to manage higher asset levels and loan balances as a result of any significant acquisition, which may materially adversely impact our earnings. Also, the negative effect of any divestitures required by regulatory authorities in acquisitions or business combinations may be greater than expected.





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**Table of Contents**

In evaluating potential acquisition opportunities, we may seek to acquire failed banks through FDIC-assisted transactions. While the FDIC may, in such transactions, provide assistance to mitigate certain risks, such as sharing in exposure to loan losses, and providing indemnification against certain liabilities, of the failed institution, we may not be able to accurately estimate our potential exposure to loan losses and other potential liabilities, or the difficulty of integration, in acquiring such institution.

Depending on the condition of any institution that we may acquire, any acquisition may, at least in the near term, materially adversely affect our capital and earnings and, if not successfully integrated following the acquisition, may continue to have such effects.

***FDIC-assisted acquisition opportunities may not become available and increased competition may make it more difficult for us to bid on failed bank transactions on terms we consider to be acceptable.***

Our near-term business strategy includes consideration of potential acquisitions of failing banks that the FDIC plans to place in receivership. The FDIC may not place banks that meet our strategic objectives into receivership. Failed bank transactions are attractive opportunities in part because of loss-sharing arrangements with the FDIC that limit the acquirer's downside risk on the purchased loan portfolio and, apart from our assumption of deposit liabilities, we have significant discretion as to the nondeposit liabilities that we assume. In addition, assets purchased from the FDIC are marked to their fair value and in many cases there is little or no addition to goodwill arising from an FDIC-assisted transaction. The bidding process for failing banks could become very competitive, and the increased competition may make it more difficult for us to bid on terms we consider to be acceptable.

***Changes in national and local economic conditions could lead to higher loan charge-offs in connection with past FDIC-assisted transactions, all of which may not be supported by loss-sharing agreements with the FDIC.***

Although loan portfolios acquired in past FDIC-assisted transactions have initially been accounted for at fair value, we do not yet know whether the loans we acquired will become impaired, and impairment may result in additional charge-offs to the portfolio. The fluctuations in national, regional and local economic conditions, including those related to local residential, commercial real estate and construction markets, may increase the level of charge-offs that we make to our loan portfolio, and, consequently, reduce our net income, and may also increase the level of charge-offs on the loan portfolios that we have acquired in such acquisitions and correspondingly reduce our net income. These fluctuations are not predictable, cannot be controlled and may have a material adverse impact on our operations and financial condition even if other favorable events occur.

Although we have entered into loss-sharing agreements with the FDIC which provide that a significant portion of losses related to specified loan portfolios that we have acquired in connection with the FDIC-assisted transactions will be borne by the FDIC, we are not protected for all losses resulting from charge-offs with respect to those specified loan portfolios. Additionally, the loss-sharing agreements have limited terms; therefore, any charge-off of related losses that we experience after the term of the loss-sharing agreements will not be reimbursable by the FDIC and will negatively impact our net income. The loss-sharing agreements also impose standard requirements on us which must be satisfied in order to retain loss share protections.

***Our compensation expense may increase substantially after Treasury's sale of the Preferred Shares.***

As a result of our participation in the CPP, among other things, we are subject to Treasury's current standards for executive compensation and corporate governance for the period during which Treasury holds our Preferred Shares. These standards were most recently set forth in the Interim Final Rule on TARP Standards for Compensation and Corporate Governance, published June 15, 2009. If the auction is successful and Treasury elects to sell all of the Preferred Shares, these executive compensation and corporate governance standards will no longer be applicable and our compensation expense for our executive officers and other senior employees may increase substantially.

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**Table of Contents**

**Risk Factors Related to an Investment in the Preferred Shares**

*The Preferred Shares are equity and are subordinated to all of our existing and future indebtedness; we are highly dependent on dividends and other amounts from our subsidiaries in order to pay dividends on, and redeem at our option, the Preferred Shares, which are subject to various prohibitions and other restrictions; and the Preferred Shares place no limitations on the amount of indebtedness we and our subsidiaries may incur in the future.*

The Preferred Shares are equity interests in the Company and do not constitute indebtedness. As such, the Preferred Shares, like our common stock, rank junior to all existing and future indebtedness and other non-equity claims on the Company with respect to assets available to satisfy claims on the Company, including in a liquidation of the Company. Additionally, unlike indebtedness, where principal and interest would customarily be payable on specified due dates, in the case of perpetual preferred stock like the Preferred Shares, there is no stated maturity date (although the Preferred Shares are subject to redemption at our option) and dividends are payable only if, when and as authorized and declared by our board of directors and depend on, among other matters, our historical and projected results of operations, liquidity, cash flows, capital levels, financial condition, debt service requirements and other cash needs, financing covenants, applicable state law, federal and state regulatory prohibitions and other restrictions and any other factors our board of directors deems relevant at the time.

The Preferred Shares are not savings accounts, deposits or other obligations of any depository institution and are not insured or guaranteed by the FDIC or any other governmental agency or instrumentality. Furthermore, the Company is a legal entity that is separate and distinct from its subsidiaries, and its subsidiaries have no obligation, contingent or otherwise, to make any payments in respect of the Preferred Shares or to make funds available therefor. Because the Company is a holding company that maintains only limited cash at that level, its ability to pay dividends on, and redeem at its option, the Preferred Shares will be highly dependent upon the receipt of dividends, fees and other amounts from its subsidiaries, which, in turn, will be highly dependent upon the historical and projected results of operations, liquidity, cash flows and financial condition of its subsidiaries. In addition, the right of the Company to participate in any distribution of assets of any of its subsidiaries upon their respective liquidation or reorganization will be subject to the prior claims of the creditors (including any depositors) and preferred equity holders of the applicable subsidiary, except to the extent that the Company is a creditor, and is recognized as a creditor, of such subsidiary. Accordingly, the holders of the Preferred Shares will be structurally subordinated to all existing and future obligations and preferred equity of the Company's subsidiaries.

There are also various legal and regulatory prohibitions and other restrictions on the ability of the Company's depository institution subsidiaries to pay dividends, extend credit or otherwise transfer funds to the Company or affiliates. Such dividend payments are subject to regulatory tests, generally based on current and retained earnings of such subsidiaries and other factors. Dividend payments to the Company from its depository institution subsidiaries may also be prohibited if such payments would impair the capital of the applicable subsidiary and in certain other cases. In addition, regulatory rules limit the aggregate amount of a depository institution's loans to, and investments in, any single affiliate in varying thresholds and may prevent the Company from borrowing from their depository institution subsidiaries and require any permitted borrowings to be collateralized.

The Company also is subject to various legal and regulatory policies and requirements impacting the Company's ability to pay dividends on, or redeem, the Preferred Shares. Under the Federal Reserve's capital regulations, in order to ensure Tier 1 capital treatment for the Preferred Shares, the Company's redemption of any of the Preferred Shares must be subject to prior regulatory approval. The Federal Reserve also may require the Company to consult with it prior to increasing dividends. In addition, as a matter of policy, the Federal Reserve may restrict or prohibit the payment of dividends if (i) the Company's net income available to shareholders for the past four quarters, net of dividends previously paid during that period, is not sufficient to

## **Table of Contents**

fully fund the dividends; (ii) the Company's prospective rate of earnings retention is not consistent with its capital needs and overall current and prospective financial condition; (iii) the Company will not meet, or is in danger of not meeting, its minimum regulatory capital ratios; or (iv) the Federal Reserve otherwise determines that the payment of dividends would constitute an unsafe or unsound practice. Recent and future regulatory developments may result in additional restrictions on the Company's ability to pay dividends.

If (i) there occurs and is continuing an event of default under the Company's trust preferred securities or (ii) the Company gives notice of its election to defer payments of interest on its trust preferred securities or such a deferral occurs and is continuing, then the Company may not declare or pay any dividends or distributions on, or redeem, purchase, acquire or make a liquidation payment with respect to, any of its capital stock (including the Preferred Shares).

In addition, the terms of the Preferred Shares do not limit the amount of debt or other obligations we or our subsidiaries may incur in the future. Accordingly, we and our subsidiaries may incur substantial amounts of additional debt and other obligations that will rank senior to the Preferred Shares or to which the Preferred Shares will be structurally subordinated.

### ***An active trading market for the Preferred Shares may not develop or be maintained.***

The Preferred Shares are not currently listed on any securities exchange or available for quotation on any national quotation system, and we do not plan to list, or make available for quotation, the Preferred Shares in the future. There can be no assurance that an active trading market for the Preferred Shares will develop or, if developed, will be maintained. If an active market is not developed and maintained, the market value and liquidity of the Preferred Shares may be materially and adversely affected.

### ***The Preferred Shares may be junior in rights and preferences to our future preferred stock.***

Subject to approval by the holders of at least 66 2/3% of the Preferred Shares then outstanding, voting as a separate class, we may issue preferred stock in the future the terms of which are expressly senior to the Preferred Shares. The terms of any such future preferred stock expressly senior to the Preferred Shares may prohibit or otherwise restrict dividend payments on the Preferred Shares. For example, the terms of any such senior preferred stock may provide that, unless full dividends for all of our outstanding preferred stock senior to the Preferred Shares have been paid for the relevant periods, no dividends will be paid on the Preferred Shares, and no Preferred Shares may be repurchased, redeemed, or otherwise acquired by us. In addition, in the event of our liquidation, dissolution or winding-up, the terms of any such senior preferred stock would likely prohibit us from making any payments on the Preferred Shares until all amounts due to holders of such senior preferred stock are paid in full.

### ***Holders of the Preferred Shares have limited voting rights.***

Unless and until we are in arrears on our dividend payments on the Preferred Shares for six quarterly periods, whether or not consecutive, the holders of the Preferred Shares will have no voting rights except with respect to certain fundamental changes in the terms of the Preferred Shares and certain other matters and except as may be required by applicable law. If dividends on the Preferred Shares are not paid in full for six quarterly periods, whether or not consecutive, the total number of positions on the Company's board of directors will automatically increase by two and the holders of the Preferred Shares, acting as a class with any other shares of our preferred stock with parity voting rights to the Preferred Shares, will have the right to elect two individuals to serve in the new director positions. This right and the terms of such directors will end when we have paid in full all accrued and unpaid dividends for all past dividend periods. See "Description of Preferred Shares - Voting Rights" in this prospectus supplement.

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**Table of Contents**

***We are subject to extensive regulation, and ownership of the Preferred Shares may have regulatory implications for holders thereof.***

We are subject to extensive federal and state banking laws, including the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956, as amended (the BHCA), and federal and state banking regulations, that impact the rights and obligations of owners of the Preferred Shares, including, for example, our ability to declare and pay dividends on, and to redeem, the Preferred Shares. Although the Company does not believe the Preferred Shares are considered voting securities currently, if they were to become voting securities for the purposes of the BHCA, whether because the Company has missed six dividend payments and holders of the Preferred Shares have the right to elect directors as a result, or for other reasons, a holder of 25% or more of the Preferred Shares, or a holder of a lesser percentage of our Preferred Shares that is deemed to exercise a controlling influence over us, may become subject to regulation under the BHCA. In addition, if the Preferred Shares become voting securities, then (a) any bank holding company or foreign bank that is subject to the BHCA may need approval to acquire or retain more than 5% of the then outstanding Preferred Shares, and (b) any holder (or group of holders acting in concert) may need regulatory approval to acquire or retain 10% or more of the Preferred Shares. A holder or group of holders may also be deemed to control us if they own one-third or more of our total equity, both voting and non-voting, aggregating all shares held by the investor across all classes of stock. Holders of the Preferred Shares should consult their own counsel with regard to regulatory implications.

***If we redeem the Preferred Shares, you may be unable to reinvest the redemption proceeds in a comparable investment at the same or greater rate of return.***

We have the right to redeem the Preferred Shares, in whole or in part, at our option at any time, subject to prior regulatory approval. If we choose to redeem the Preferred Shares in part, we have been informed by DTC that it is their current practice to determine by lot the amount of the interest of each direct participant (through which beneficial owners hold their interest) to be redeemed. If we choose to redeem the Preferred Shares, we are likely to do so if we are able to obtain a lower cost of capital. If prevailing interest rates are relatively low if or when we choose to redeem the Preferred Shares, you generally will not be able to reinvest the redemption proceeds in a comparable investment at the same or greater rate of return. Furthermore, if we redeem the Preferred Shares in part, the liquidity of the outstanding Preferred Shares may be limited.

***If we do not redeem the Preferred Shares prior to February 15, 2014, the cost of this capital to us will increase substantially and could have a material adverse effect on our liquidity and cash flows.***

We have the right to redeem the Preferred Shares, in whole or in part, at our option at any time. If we do not redeem the Preferred Shares prior to February 15, 2014, the cost of this capital to us will increase substantially on and after that date, with the dividend rate increasing from 5.0% per annum to 9.0% per annum, which could have a material adverse effect on our liquidity and cash flows. See Description of Preferred Shares Redemption and Repurchases in this prospectus supplement. Any redemption by us of the Preferred Shares would require prior regulatory approval from the Federal Reserve. We have not applied for such regulatory approval to redeem the Preferred Shares, although, in the future, we may seek such approval and, if such approval is obtained (as to which no assurance is given), redeem the Preferred Shares for cash.

***Treasury is a federal agency and your ability to bring a claim against Treasury under the federal securities laws in connection with a purchase of Preferred Shares may be limited.***

The doctrine of sovereign immunity, as limited by the Federal Tort Claims Act (the FTCA), provides that claims may not be brought against the United States of America or any agency or instrumentality thereof unless specifically permitted by act of Congress. The FTCA bars claims for fraud or misrepresentation. At least one federal court, in a case involving a federal agency, has held that the United States may assert its sovereign immunity to claims brought under the federal securities laws. In addition, Treasury and its officers, agents, and employees are exempt from liability for any violation or alleged violation of the anti-fraud provisions of

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## **Table of Contents**

Section 10(b) of the Exchange Act by virtue of Section 3(c) thereof. The underwriters are not claiming to be agents of Treasury in this offering. Accordingly, any attempt to assert such a claim against the officers, agents or employees of Treasury for a violation of the Securities Act or the Exchange Act resulting from an alleged material misstatement in or material omission from this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus, the registration statement of which this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus or the documents incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus are a part or resulting from any other act or omission in connection with the offering of the Preferred Shares by Treasury would likely be barred.

### **Risk Factors Related to the Auction Process**

*The price of the Preferred Shares could decline rapidly and significantly following this offering.*

The public offering price of the Preferred Shares, which will be the clearing price plus accrued dividends thereon, will be determined through an auction process conducted by Treasury and the auction agents. Prior to this offering there has been no public market for the Preferred Shares, and the public offering price may bear no relation to market demand for the Preferred Shares once trading begins. We have been informed by both Treasury and Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated and Sandler O'Neill & Partners, L.P., as the auction agents, that they believe that the bidding process will reveal a clearing price for the Preferred Shares offered in the auction process, which will either be the highest price at which all of the Preferred Shares offered may be sold to bidders, if bids are received for 100% or more of the offered Preferred Shares, or the minimum bid price of \$763.50, if bids are received for at least half, but less than all, of the offered Preferred Shares. If there is little or no demand for the Preferred Shares at or above the public offering price once trading begins, the price of the Preferred Shares would likely decline following this offering. Limited or less-than-expected liquidity in the Preferred Shares, including decreased liquidity due to a sale of less than all of the offered Preferred Shares, could also cause the trading price of the Preferred Shares to decline. In addition, the auction process may lead to more volatility in, or a decline in, the trading price of the Preferred Shares after the initial sales of the Preferred Shares in this offering. If your objective is to make a short-term profit by selling the Preferred Shares you purchase in the offering shortly after trading begins, you should not submit a bid in the auction.

*The auction process for this offering may result in a phenomenon known as the winner's curse, and, as a result, investors may experience significant losses.*

The auction process for this offering may result in a phenomenon known as the winner's curse. At the conclusion of the auction process, successful bidders that receive allocations of Preferred Shares in this offering may infer that there is little incremental demand for the Preferred Shares above or equal to the public offering price. As a result, successful bidders may conclude that they paid too much for the Preferred Shares and could seek to immediately sell their Preferred Shares to limit their losses should the price of the Preferred Shares decline in trading after the auction process is completed. In this situation, other investors that did not submit bids that are accepted by Treasury may wait for this selling to be completed, resulting in reduced demand for the Preferred Shares in the public market and a significant decline in the trading price of the Preferred Shares. Therefore, we caution investors that submitting successful bids and receiving allocations may be followed by a significant decline in the value of their investment in the Preferred Shares shortly after this offering.

*The auction process for this offering may result in a situation in which less price sensitive investors play a larger role in the determination of the public offering price and constitute a larger portion of the investors in this offering, and, as a result, the public offering price may not be sustainable once trading of Preferred Shares begins.*

In a typical public offering of securities, a majority of the securities sold to the public are purchased by professional investors that have significant experience in determining valuations for companies in connection with such offerings. These professional investors typically have access to, or conduct their own, independent research and analysis regarding investments in such offerings. Other investors typically have less access to this level of research and analysis, and as a result, may be less sensitive to price when participating in the auction.

## **Table of Contents**

Because of the auction process used in this auction, these less price sensitive investors may have a greater influence in setting the public offering price (because a larger number of higher bids may cause the clearing price in the auction to be higher than it would otherwise have been absent such bids) and may have a higher level of participation in this offering than is normal for other public offerings. This, in turn, could cause the auction process to result in a public offering price that is higher than the price professional investors are willing to pay for the Preferred Shares. As a result, the trading price of the Preferred Shares may decrease once trading of the Preferred Shares begins. Also, because professional investors may have a substantial degree of influence on the trading price of the Preferred Shares over time, the trading price of the Preferred Shares may decline and not recover after this offering. Furthermore, if the public offering price of the Preferred Shares is above the level that investors determine is reasonable for the Preferred Shares, some investors may attempt to short sell the Preferred Shares after trading begins, which would create additional downward pressure on the trading price of the Preferred Shares.

***The clearing price for the Preferred Shares may bear little or no relationship to the price for the Preferred Shares that would be established using traditional valuation methods, and, as a result, the trading price of the Preferred Shares may decline significantly following the issuance of the Preferred Shares.***

The public offering price of the Preferred Shares will be equal to the clearing price plus accrued dividends thereon. The clearing price of the Preferred Shares may have little or no relationship to, and may be significantly higher than, the price for the Preferred Shares that otherwise would be established using traditional indicators of value, such as our future prospects and those of our industry in general; our revenues, earnings, and other financial and operating information; multiples of revenue, earnings, capital levels, cash flows, and other operating metrics; market prices of securities and other financial and operating information of companies engaged in activities similar to us; and the views of research analysts. The trading price of the Preferred Shares may vary significantly from the public offering price. Potential investors should not submit a bid in the auction for this offering unless they are willing to take the risk that the price of the Preferred Shares could decline significantly.

***Successful bidders may receive the full number of Preferred Shares subject to their bids, so potential investors should not make bids for more Preferred Shares than they are prepared to purchase.***

Each bidder may submit multiple bids. However, as bids are independent, each bid may result in an allocation of Preferred Shares. Allocation of the Preferred Shares will be determined by, first, allocating Preferred Shares to any bids made above the clearing price, and second, allocating Preferred Shares (on a pro-rata basis, if appropriate) among bids made at the clearing price. If Treasury elects to sell any Preferred Shares in this offering, the bids of successful bidders that are above the clearing price will be allocated all of the Preferred Shares represented by such bids, and only accepted bids submitted at the clearing price, in certain cases, will experience pro-rata allocation, if any. Bids that have not been modified or withdrawn by the time of the submission deadline are final and irrevocable, and bidders who submit bids that are accepted by Treasury will be obligated to purchase the Preferred Shares allocated to them. Accordingly, the sum of a bidder's bid sizes as of the submission deadline should be no more than the total number of Preferred Shares the bidder is willing to purchase, and investors are cautioned against submitting a bid that does not accurately represent the number of Preferred Shares that they are willing and prepared to purchase.

***Submitting a bid does not guarantee an allocation of Preferred Shares, even if a bidder submits a bid at or above the public offering price of the Preferred Shares.***

The auction agents, in their sole discretion, may require that bidders confirm their bids before the auction closes (although the auction agents are under no obligation to reconfirm bids for any reason, except as may be required by applicable securities laws). If a bidder is requested to confirm a bid and fails to do so within the permitted time period, that bid may be deemed to have been withdrawn and, accordingly, that bidder may not receive an allocation of Preferred Shares even if the bid is at or above the public offering price. The auction

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**Table of Contents**

agents may, however, choose to accept any such bid even if it has not been reconfirmed. In addition, the auction agents may determine in some cases to impose size limits on the aggregate size of bids that they choose to accept from any bidder (including any network broker), and may reject any bid that they determine, in their discretion, has a potentially manipulative, disruptive or other adverse effect on the auction process or the offering. Furthermore, if bids for 100% or more of the offered Preferred Shares are received, and Treasury elects to sell any Preferred Shares in the auction, then any accepted bids submitted in the auction above the clearing price will receive allocations in full, while each bid submitted at the clearing price will be allocated the number of Preferred Shares represented by such bids, in the case bids for 100% of the offered Preferred Shares are received, or a number of Preferred Shares approximately equal to the pro-rata allocation percentage multiplied by the number of Preferred Shares represented by such bid, rounded to the nearest whole number of Preferred Shares (subject to rounding to eliminate odd-lots), in the case bids for more than 100% of the offered Preferred Shares are received. If bids for at least half, but less than all, of the offered Preferred Shares are received, and Treasury chooses to sell fewer Preferred Shares than the number of Preferred Shares for which bids were received (but not less than half), then all bids will experience equal pro-rata allocation. Treasury could also decide, in its sole discretion, not to sell any Preferred Shares in this offering after the clearing price has been determined. As a result of these factors, you may not receive an allocation for all the Preferred Shares for which you submit a bid.

*No assurance is given that the auction will be successful or that the full number of offered Preferred Shares will be sold.*

If sufficient bids are received and accepted by the auction agents to enable Treasury to sell the offered Preferred Shares in this offering, the public offering price will be set at the clearing price plus accrued dividends thereon, unless Treasury decides, in its sole discretion, not to sell any Preferred Shares in this offering after the clearing price is determined. The clearing price will be determined based on the number of valid, irrevocable bids at the time of the submission deadline that Treasury decides, in its sole discretion, to accept. If valid, irrevocable bids are received for 100% or more of the offered Preferred Shares at the submission deadline, the clearing price will be equal to the highest price of the offered Preferred Shares that can be sold in the auction. If, however, bids are received for at least half, but less than all, of the offered Preferred Shares, then Treasury may (but is not required to) sell, at the minimum bid price in the auction (which will be deemed the clearing price) the number of Preferred Shares it chooses to sell up to the number of bids received in the auction, so long as at least half of the offered Preferred Shares are sold. If bids are received for less than half of the offered Preferred Shares, Treasury will not sell any Preferred Shares in this offering. The liquidity of the Preferred Shares may be limited if less than all of the offered Preferred Shares are sold by Treasury. Possible future sales of Treasury's remaining Preferred Shares, if any, that are held following this offering, could affect the trading price of the Preferred Shares sold in this offering.

*Submitting bids through a network broker or any other broker that is not an auction agent may in some circumstances shorten deadlines for potential investors to submit, modify or withdraw their bids.*

In order to participate in the auction, bidders must have an account with, and submit bids to purchase Preferred Shares through, either an auction agent or a network broker. Brokers that are not network brokers will need to submit their bids, either for their own account or on behalf of their customers, through an auction agent or a network broker. Potential investors and brokers that wish to submit bids in the auction and do not have an account with an auction agent or a network broker must either establish such an account prior to bidding in the auction or cause a broker that has such an account to submit a bid through that account. Network brokers and other brokers will impose earlier submission deadlines than those imposed by the auction agents in order to have sufficient time to aggregate bids received from their respective customers and to transmit the aggregate bid to an auction agent (or, in the case of non-network brokers submitting bids through a network broker, to such network broker to transmit to the auction agents) before the auction closes. As a result of such earlier submission deadlines, potential investors who submit bids through a network broker, or brokers that submit bids through an auction agent or a network broker, will need to submit or withdraw their bids earlier than other bidders, and it may in some circumstances be more difficult for such bids to be submitted, modified or withdrawn.

**Table of Contents****USE OF PROCEEDS**

The Preferred Shares offered by this prospectus supplement are being sold for the account of Treasury. Any proceeds from the sale of these Preferred Shares will be received by Treasury for its own account, and we will not receive any proceeds from the sale of any Preferred Shares offered by this prospectus supplement.

**RATIOS OF EARNINGS TO COMBINED FIXED CHARGES AND PREFERRED STOCK DIVIDENDS**

The following table sets forth certain information concerning our ratio of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends, both including and excluding interest on deposits, for the three months ended March 31, 2012 and 2011 and for each of the years in the five-year period ended December 31, 2011.

|  | Three Months |      |      |                         |        |        |      |
|--|--------------|------|------|-------------------------|--------|--------|------|
|  | Ended        |      |      | Year Ended December 31, |        |        |      |
|  | March 31,    |      | 2011 | 2010                    | 2009   | 2008   | 2007 |
|  | 2012         | 2011 | 2011 | 2010                    | 2009   | 2008   | 2007 |
| Including interest on deposits (1)     | 2.27         | 1.16 | 1.91 | 0.69                    | 0.14   | 0.89   | 1.32 |
| Excluding interest on deposits (1) (2) | 5.85         | 0.61 | 5.86 | (1.23)                  | (5.88) | (0.26) | 3.57 |

- (1) For purposes of computing the above ratios, earnings consist of net income from continuing operations before income tax provision. Fixed charges, excluding interest on deposits, consist of all interest expense and the proportion deemed representative of the interest factor of rent expense. Fixed charges, including interest on deposits, include all of such items plus interest on deposits. For all periods, we computed the ratios of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends by dividing earnings by combined fixed charges. If we do not redeem the Preferred Shares prior to February 15, 2014, the cost of this capital to us will increase substantially on and after that date, with the dividend rate increasing from 5.0% to 9.0% per annum, which would adversely affect our ratio of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends.
- (2) For the years ended December 31, 2010, 2009 and 2008, earnings were insufficient to cover fixed charges excluding interest on deposits by \$5,744,000, \$32,180,000 and \$1,300,000, respectively.



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**Table of Contents**

**DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED SHARES**

This section summarizes specific terms and provisions of the Preferred Shares. The description of the Preferred Shares contained in this section is qualified in its entirety by the actual terms of the Preferred Shares, as are stated in the Articles of Amendment to the Company's Articles of Incorporation, a copy of which was attached as Exhibit 3.1 to our Current Report on Form 8-K filed on November 21, 2008 and incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. See "Where You Can Find More Information" and "Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference" in this prospectus supplement.

**General**

The Preferred Shares constitute a series of our perpetual, cumulative, preferred stock, consisting of 52,000 shares, par value \$0.01 per share, having a liquidation preference amount of \$1,000 per share. The Preferred Shares have no maturity date. We issued the Preferred Shares to Treasury on November 21, 2008 in connection with the CPP for an aggregate purchase price of \$52 million in a private placement exempt from the registration requirements of the Securities Act. The Preferred Shares qualify as Tier 1 capital for regulatory purposes.

**Dividends**

**Rate.** Dividends on the Preferred Shares are payable quarterly in arrears, when, as and if authorized and declared by our board of directors out of legally available funds, on a cumulative basis on the \$1,000 per share liquidation preference amount plus the amount of accrued and unpaid dividends for any prior dividend periods, at a rate of (i) 5% per annum, from the original issuance date to but excluding the first day of the first dividend period commencing on or after the fifth anniversary of the original issuance date (i.e., 5% per annum from November 21, 2008 to but excluding February 15, 2014), and (ii) 9% per annum, from and after the first day of the first dividend period commencing on or after the fifth anniversary of the original issuance date (i.e., 9% per annum on and after February 15, 2014). Dividends are payable quarterly in arrears on February 15, May 15, August 15 and November 15 of each year. Each dividend will be payable to holders of record as they appear on our stock register on the applicable record date, which will be the 15th calendar day immediately preceding the related dividend payment date (whether or not a business day), or such other record date determined by our board of directors that is not more than 60 nor less than ten days prior to the related dividend payment date. Each period from and including a dividend payment date (or the date of the issuance of the Preferred Shares) to but excluding the following dividend payment date is referred to as a dividend period. Dividends payable for each dividend period are computed on the basis of a 360-day year consisting of twelve 30-day months. If a scheduled dividend payment date falls on a day that is not a business day, the dividend will be paid on the next business day as if it were paid on the scheduled dividend payment date, and no interest or other additional amount will accrue on the dividend. The term "business day" means any day except Saturday, Sunday and any day on which banking institutions in the State of New York generally are authorized or required by law or other governmental actions to close.

Holders of Preferred Shares sold by Treasury in the auction, if any, that are record holders on the record date for the August 15, 2012 dividend payment date will be entitled to any declared dividends payable on such date.

Dividends on the Preferred Shares are cumulative. If for any reason our board of directors does not declare a dividend on the Preferred Shares for a particular dividend period, or if the board of directors declares less than a full dividend, we will remain obligated to pay the unpaid portion of the dividend for that period and the unpaid dividend will compound on each subsequent dividend date (meaning that dividends for future dividend periods will accrue on any unpaid dividend amounts for prior dividend periods).

We are not obligated to pay holders of the Preferred Shares any dividend in excess of the dividends on the Preferred Shares that are payable as described above. There is no sinking fund with respect to dividends on the Preferred Shares.

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## **Table of Contents**

**Priority of Dividends.** So long as the Preferred Shares remains outstanding, we may not declare or pay a dividend or other distribution on our common stock or any other shares of Junior Stock (other than dividends payable solely in common stock) or Parity Stock (other than dividends paid on a pro rata basis with the Preferred Shares), and we generally may not directly or indirectly purchase, redeem or otherwise acquire any shares of common stock, Junior Stock or Parity Stock unless all accrued and unpaid dividends on the Preferred Shares for all past dividend periods are paid in full.

Junior Stock means our common stock and any other class or series of our stock the terms of which expressly provide that it ranks junior to the Preferred Shares as to dividend rights and/or as to rights on liquidation, dissolution or winding up of the Company. We currently have no outstanding class or series of stock constituting Junior Stock other than our common stock.

Parity Stock means any class or series of our stock, other than the Preferred Shares, the terms of which do not expressly provide that such class or series will rank senior or junior to the Preferred Shares as to dividend rights and/or as to rights on liquidation, dissolution or winding up of the Company, in each case without regard to whether dividends accrue cumulatively or non-cumulatively. We currently have no outstanding class or series of stock constituting Parity Stock.

### **Liquidation Rights**

In the event of any voluntary or involuntary liquidation, dissolution or winding up of the affairs of the Company, holders of the Preferred Shares will be entitled to receive for each share of the Preferred Shares, out of the assets of the Company or proceeds available for distribution to our stockholders, subject to any rights of our creditors, before any distribution of assets or proceeds is made to or set aside for the holders of our common stock and any other class or series of our stock ranking junior to the Preferred Shares, payment of an amount equal to the sum of (i) the \$1,000 liquidation preference amount per share and (ii) the amount of any accrued and unpaid dividends on the Preferred Shares (including dividends accrued on any unpaid dividends). To the extent the assets or proceeds available for distribution to stockholders are not sufficient to fully pay the liquidation payments owing to the holders of the Preferred Shares and the holders of any other class or series of our stock ranking equally with the Preferred Shares, the holders of the Preferred Shares and such other stock will share ratably in the distribution.

For purposes of the liquidation rights of the Preferred Shares, neither a merger or consolidation of the Company with another entity, including a merger or consolidation in which the holders of Preferred Shares receive cash, securities or other property for their shares, nor a sale, lease or exchange of all or substantially all of the Company's assets will constitute a liquidation, dissolution or winding up of the affairs of the Company.

### **Redemptions and Repurchases**

We may redeem the Preferred Shares, at any time, in whole or in part, at our option, subject to prior approval by the appropriate federal banking agency, for a redemption price equal to 100% of the liquidation preference amount per Preferred Share plus any accrued and unpaid dividends to but excluding the date of redemption (including dividends accrued on any unpaid dividends), provided that any declared but unpaid dividend payable on a redemption date that occurs subsequent to the record date for the dividend will be payable to the holder of record of the redeemed shares on the dividend record date.

To exercise the redemption right described above, we must give notice of the redemption to the holders of record of the Preferred Shares by first class mail, not less than 30 days and not more than 60 days before the date of redemption. Each notice of redemption given to a holder of Preferred Shares must state: (i) the redemption date; (ii) the number of Preferred Shares to be redeemed and, if less than all the shares held by such holder are to be redeemed, the number of such shares to be redeemed from such holder; (iii) the redemption price; and (iv) the place or places where certificates for such shares are to be surrendered for payment of the redemption price. In the case of a partial redemption of the Preferred Shares, the shares to be redeemed will be selected either pro rata or in such other manner as our board of directors determines to be fair and equitable.

## **Table of Contents**

The Securities Purchase Agreement between us and Treasury provides that so long as Treasury continues to own any Preferred Shares, we may not repurchase any Preferred Shares from any other holder of such shares unless we offer to repurchase a ratable portion of the Preferred Shares then held by Treasury on the same terms and conditions.

Preferred Shares that we redeem, repurchase or otherwise acquire will revert to authorized but unissued shares of preferred stock, which may then be reissued by us as any series of preferred stock other than the Preferred Shares.

## **No Conversion Rights**

Holders of the Preferred Shares have no right to exchange or convert their shares into common stock or any other securities.

## **Voting Rights**

The holders of the Preferred Shares do not have voting rights other than those described below, except to the extent specifically required by Georgia law.

Whenever dividends have not been paid on the Preferred Shares for six or more quarterly dividend periods, whether or not consecutive, the authorized number of directors of the Company will automatically increase by two and the holders of the Preferred Shares will have the right, with the holders of shares of any other classes or series of Voting Parity Stock outstanding at the time, voting together as a class, to elect two directors (the Preferred Directors ) to fill such newly created directorships at our next annual meeting of stockholders (or at a special meeting called for that purpose prior to the next annual meeting) and at each subsequent annual meeting of stockholders until all accrued and unpaid dividends (including dividends accrued on any unpaid dividends) for all past dividend periods on all outstanding Preferred Shares have been paid in full at which time this right will terminate with respect to the Preferred Shares, subject to revesting in the event of each and every subsequent default by us in the payment of dividends on the Preferred Shares.

No person may be elected as a Preferred Director who would cause us to violate any corporate governance requirements of any securities exchange or other trading facility on which our securities may then be listed or traded that listed or traded companies must have a majority of independent directors. Upon any termination of the right of the holders of the Preferred Shares and Voting Parity Stock as a class to vote for directors as described above, the Preferred Directors will cease to be qualified as directors, the terms of office of all Preferred Directors then in office will terminate immediately and the authorized number of directors will be reduced by the number of Preferred Directors which had been elected by the holders of the Preferred Shares and the Voting Parity Stock. Any Preferred Director may be removed at any time, with or without cause, and any vacancy created by such a removal may be filled, only by the affirmative vote of the holders a majority of the outstanding Preferred Shares voting separately as a class together with the holders of shares of Voting Parity Stock, to the extent the voting rights of such holders described above are then exercisable. If the office of any Preferred Director becomes vacant for any reason other than removal from office, the remaining Preferred Director may choose a successor who will hold office for the unexpired term of the office in which the vacancy occurred.

The term Voting Parity Stock means with regard to any matter as to which the holders of the Preferred Shares are entitled to vote, any series of Parity Stock (as defined under Dividends-Priority of Dividends above) upon which voting rights similar to those of the Preferred Shares have been conferred and are exercisable with respect to such matter. We currently have no outstanding shares of Voting Parity Stock.

Although the Company does not believe the Preferred Shares are considered voting securities currently, if they were to become voting securities for the purposes of the BHCA, whether because the

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**Table of Contents**

Company has missed six dividend payments and holders of the Preferred Shares have the right to elect directors as a result, or for other reasons, a holder of 25% or more of the Preferred Shares, or a holder of a lesser percentage of our Preferred Shares that is deemed to exercise a controlling influence over us, may become subject to regulation under the BHCA. In addition, if the Preferred Shares become voting securities, then (a) any bank holding company or foreign bank that is subject to the BHCA may need approval to acquire or retain more than 5% of the then outstanding Preferred Shares, and (b) any holder (or group of holders acting in concert) may need regulatory approval to acquire or retain 10% or more of the Preferred Shares. A holder or group of holders may also be deemed to control us if they own one-third or more of our total equity, both voting and non-voting, aggregating all shares held by the investor across all classes of stock. Holders of the Preferred Shares should consult their own counsel with regard to regulatory implications.

In addition to any other vote or consent required by Georgia law or by our Articles of Incorporation, the vote or consent of the holders of at least 66-2/3% of the outstanding Preferred Shares, voting as a separate class, is required in order to do the following:

amend or alter our Articles of Incorporation or the Articles of Amendment with respect to the Preferred Shares to authorize or create or increase the authorized amount of, or any issuance of, any shares of, or any securities convertible into or exchangeable or exercisable for shares of, any class or series of our capital stock ranking senior to the Preferred Shares with respect to either or both the payment of dividends and/or the distribution of assets on any liquidation, dissolution or winding up of the Company; or

amend, alter or repeal any provision of our Articles of Incorporation or the Articles of Amendment with respect to the Preferred Shares in a manner that adversely affects the rights, preferences, privileges or voting powers of the Preferred Shares; or

consummate a binding share exchange or reclassification involving the Preferred Shares or a merger or consolidation of the Company with another entity, unless (i) the Preferred Shares remain outstanding or, in the case of a merger or consolidation in which the Company is not the surviving or resulting entity, are converted into or exchanged for preference securities of the surviving or resulting entity or its ultimate parent, and (ii) the Preferred Shares remaining outstanding or such preference securities, have such rights, preferences, privileges, voting powers, limitations and restrictions, taken as a whole, as are not materially less favorable than the rights, preferences, privileges, voting powers, limitations and restrictions of the Preferred Shares immediately prior to consummation of the transaction, taken as a whole;

*provided, however,* that (1) any increase in the amount of our authorized shares of preferred stock, including authorized Preferred Shares necessary to satisfy preemptive or similar rights granted by us to other persons prior to November 21, 2008, and (2) the creation and issuance, or an increase in the authorized or issued amount, of any other series of preferred stock, or any securities convertible into or exchangeable or exercisable for any other series of preferred stock, ranking equally with and/or junior to the Preferred Shares with respect to the payment of dividends, whether such dividends are cumulative or non-cumulative and the distribution of assets upon our liquidation, dissolution or winding up, will not be deemed to adversely affect the rights, preferences, privileges or voting powers of the Preferred Shares and will not require the vote or consent of the holders of the Preferred Shares.

To the extent holders of the Preferred Shares are entitled to vote, holders of Preferred Shares will be entitled to one vote for each share then held.

The voting provisions described above will not apply if, at or prior to the time when the vote or consent of the holders of the Preferred Shares would otherwise be required, all outstanding Preferred Shares have been redeemed by us or called for redemption upon proper notice and sufficient funds have been set aside by us for the benefit of the holders of Preferred Shares to effect the redemption.

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## **Table of Contents**

### **Book-Entry Procedures**

The Depository Trust Company (the "DTC") will act as securities depository for the Preferred Shares. We will issue one or more fully registered global securities certificates in the name of DTC's nominee, Cede & Co. These certificates will represent the total aggregate number of Preferred Shares sold in the auction. We will deposit these certificates with DTC or a custodian appointed by DTC. We will not issue certificates to you for the Preferred Shares that you purchase, unless DTC's services are discontinued as described below.

Title to book-entry interests in the Preferred Shares will pass by book-entry registration of the transfer within the records of DTC in accordance with its procedures. Book-entry interests in the Preferred Shares may be transferred within DTC in accordance with procedures established for these purposes by DTC. Each person owning a beneficial interest in the Preferred Shares must rely on the procedures of DTC and the participant through which such person owns its interest to exercise its rights as a holder of the Preferred Shares.

DTC has advised us that it is a limited-purpose trust company organized under the New York Banking Law, a member of the Federal Reserve System, a clearing corporation within the meaning of the New York Uniform Commercial Code and a clearing agency registered under the provisions of Section 17A of the Exchange Act. DTC holds securities that its participants ("Direct Participants") deposit with DTC. DTC also facilitates the settlement among Direct Participants of securities transactions, such as transfers and pledges, in deposited securities through electronic computerized book-entry changes in Direct Participants' accounts, thereby eliminating the need for physical movement of securities certificates. Direct Participants include securities brokers and dealers, banks, trust companies, clearing corporations, and certain other organizations. Access to the DTC system is also available to others such as securities brokers and dealers, including the underwriters, banks and trust companies that clear through or maintain a custodial relationship with a Direct Participant, either directly or indirectly ("Indirect Participants"). The rules applicable to DTC and its Direct and Indirect Participants are on file with the SEC.

When you purchase Preferred Shares within the DTC system, the purchase must be by or through a Direct Participant. The Direct Participant will receive a credit for the Preferred Shares on DTC's records. You, as the actual owner of the Preferred Shares, are the beneficial owner. Your beneficial ownership interest will be recorded on the Direct and Indirect Participants' records, but DTC will have no knowledge of your individual ownership. DTC's records reflect only the identity of the Direct Participants to whose accounts Preferred Shares are credited.

You will not receive written confirmation from DTC of your purchase. The Direct or Indirect Participants through whom you purchased Preferred Shares should send you written confirmations providing details of your transactions, as well as periodic statements of your holdings. The Direct and Indirect Participants are responsible for keeping an accurate account of the holdings of their customers like you.

Transfers of ownership interests held through Direct and Indirect Participants will be accomplished by entries on the books of Direct and Indirect Participants acting on behalf of the beneficial owners.

Conveyance of notices and other communications by DTC to Direct Participants, by Direct Participants to Indirect Participants, and by Direct Participants and Indirect Participants to beneficial owners will be governed by arrangements among them, subject to any statutory or regulatory requirements as may be in effect from time to time.

We understand that, under DTC's existing practices, in the event that we request any action of the holders, or an owner of a beneficial interest in a global security such as you desires to take any action which a holder is entitled to take under our charter, DTC would authorize the Direct Participants holding the relevant shares to take such action, and those Direct Participants and any Indirect Participants would authorize beneficial owners owning through those Direct and Indirect Participants to take such action or would otherwise act upon the instructions of beneficial owners owning through them.

## **Table of Contents**

Any redemption notices with respect to the Preferred Shares will be sent to Cede & Co. If less than all of the Preferred Shares are being redeemed, DTC will reduce each Direct Participant's holdings of Preferred Shares in accordance with its procedures.

In those instances where a vote is required, neither DTC nor Cede & Co. itself will consent or vote with respect to the Preferred Shares. Under its usual procedures, DTC would mail an omnibus proxy to us as soon as possible after the record date. The omnibus proxy assigns Cede & Co.'s consenting or voting rights to those Direct Participants whose accounts the Preferred Shares are credited to on the record date, which are identified in a listing attached to the omnibus proxy.

Dividends on the Preferred Shares will be made directly to DTC's nominee (or its successor, if applicable). DTC's practice is to credit participants' accounts on the relevant payment date in accordance with their respective holdings shown on DTC's records unless DTC has reason to believe that it will not receive payment on that payment date.

Payments by Direct and Indirect Participants to beneficial owners will be governed by standing instructions and customary practices, as is the case with securities held for the accounts of customers in bearer form or registered in street name. These payments will be the responsibility of the participant and not of DTC, us or any agent of ours.

DTC may discontinue providing its services as securities depository with respect to the Preferred Shares at any time by giving reasonable notice to us. Additionally, we may decide to discontinue the book-entry only system of transfers with respect to the Preferred Shares. In that event, we will print and deliver certificates in fully registered form for Preferred Shares. If DTC notifies us that it is unwilling to continue as securities depository, or it is unable to continue or ceases to be a clearing agency registered under the Exchange Act and a successor depository is not appointed by us within 90 days after receiving such notice or becoming aware that DTC is no longer so registered, we will issue Preferred Shares in definitive form, at our expense, upon registration of transfer of, or in exchange for, such global security.

According to DTC, the foregoing information with respect to DTC has been provided to the financial community for informational purposes only and is not intended to serve as a representation, warranty or contract modification of any kind.

## **Global Clearance and Settlement Procedures**

Initial settlement for the Preferred Shares will be made in immediately available funds. Secondary market trading among DTC's Participants will occur in the ordinary way in accordance with DTC's rules and will be settled in immediately available funds using DTC's Same-Day Funds Settlement System.

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**Table of Contents**

**AUCTION PROCESS**

The following describes the auction process used to determine the public offering price of the Preferred Shares. That process differs from methods traditionally used in other underwritten public offerings. Treasury and the underwriters will determine the public offering price and the allocation of the Preferred Shares in this offering by an auction process conducted by the joint book-running managers, Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated and Sandler O'Neill & Partners, L.P., in their capacity as the auction agents. This auction process will involve a modified Dutch auction mechanic in which the auction agents (working with a number of other brokers) will receive and accept bids from bidders for the Preferred Shares. We do not intend to submit any bids in the auction. After the auction closes and those bids become irrevocable (which will occur automatically at the submission deadline to the extent such bids have not been modified or withdrawn at that time), the auction agents will determine the clearing price for the sale of the Preferred Shares offered hereby and, if Treasury chooses to proceed with the offering, the underwriters will allocate Preferred Shares to the winning bidders. The clearing price for the Preferred Shares may bear little or no relationship to the price that would be established using traditional valuation methods. You should carefully consider the risks described under Risk Factors Risk Factors Related to the Auction Process beginning on page S-20 of this prospectus supplement.

**Eligibility and Account Status**

In order to participate in the auction process, bidders must have an account with, and submit bids to purchase Preferred Shares through, either an auction agent or one of the network brokers. Brokers that are not network brokers will need to submit their bids, either for their own account or on behalf of their customers, through the auction agents or a network broker. If you wish to bid in the auction and do not have an account with an auction agent or a network broker, you will either need to establish such an account prior to bidding in the auction (which may be difficult to do before the submission deadline) or contact your existing broker and request that it submit a bid through an auction agent or a network broker. Network brokers and other brokers will have deadlines relating to the auction that are earlier than those imposed by the auction agents, as described below under The Auction Process The Bidding Process.

Because the Preferred Shares are complex financial instruments for which there is no established trading market, the auction agents, each network broker and any other broker that submits bids through the auction agents or any network broker will be required to establish and enforce client suitability standards, including eligibility, account status and size, to evaluate whether an investment in the Preferred Shares is appropriate for any particular investor. Each of them will individually apply its own standards in making that determination, but in each case those standards will be implemented in accordance with the applicable requirements and guidelines of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority ( FINRA ). If you do not meet the relevant suitability requirements of an auction agent or another broker, you will not be able to bid in the auction. Accounts at an auction agent or any other broker, including broker accounts, are also subject to the customary rules of those institutions. You should contact your brokerage firm to better understand how you may submit bids in the auction process.

An auction agent or network brokers may require bidders (including any brokers that may be bidding on behalf of their customers) to submit additional information, such as tax identification numbers, a valid e-mail address and other contact information, and other information that may be required to establish or maintain an account.

The auction agents and the network brokers, upon request, will provide certain information to you in connection with the offering, including this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus and forms used by such brokers, if any, to submit bids. Additionally, you should understand that:

before submitting a bid in the auction, you should read this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference, including all the risk factors;

**Table of Contents**

the minimum bid price was agreed by the auction agents and Treasury, and we did not participate in that determination and therefore cannot provide any information regarding the factors that Treasury and the auction agents considered in determining the minimum bid price;

if valid, irrevocable bids are received for 100% or more of the offered Preferred Shares at the submission deadline, the clearing price will be equal to the highest price at which all of the offered Preferred Shares can be sold in the auction. In this case, the clearing price will be determined based on the number of valid, irrevocable bids at the time of the submission deadline that Treasury decides, in its sole discretion, to accept (it being understood that Treasury must accept bids for 100% of the offered Preferred Shares if it accepts any bid);

if valid, irrevocable bids are received for at least half, but less than all, of the offered Preferred Shares at the submission deadline, then Treasury may (but is not required to) sell, at the minimum bid price per share in the auction (which will be deemed the clearing price), the number of Preferred Shares it chooses to sell up to the number of bids received in the auction, so long as at least half of the offered Preferred Shares are sold;

if bids are received for less than half of the offered Preferred Shares, Treasury will not sell any Preferred Shares in this offering;

if there is little or no demand for the Preferred Shares at or above the public offering price once trading begins, the trading price of the Preferred Shares will decline;

the liquidity of any market for the Preferred Shares may be affected by the number of Preferred Shares that Treasury elects to sell in this offering, and the price of the Preferred Shares may decline if the Preferred Shares are illiquid;

the auction agents, in their sole discretion, have the right to reconfirm any bid by contacting the purported bidder directly and to impose size limits on the aggregate size of bids that it chooses to accept from any bidder, including network brokers (although the auction agents are under no obligation to reconfirm bids for any reason, except as may be required by applicable securities laws). If you are requested to reconfirm a bid and fail to do so in a timely manner, the auction agents may deem your bid to have been withdrawn, but alternatively may in their discretion choose to accept any such bid even if it has not been reconfirmed;

the auction agents may reject any bid that they determine, in their discretion, has a potentially manipulative, disruptive or other adverse effect on the auction process or the offering; and

the auction agents will not provide bidders with any information about the bids of other bidders or auction trends, or with advice regarding bidding strategies, in connection with the auction process.

None of the underwriters, Treasury or us have undertaken any efforts to qualify the Preferred Shares for sale in any jurisdiction outside the United States. Except to the limited extent that this offering will be open to certain non-U.S. investors under private placement exemptions in certain countries other than the United States, investors located outside the United States should not expect to be eligible to participate in this offering.

Even if a bidder places a bid in the auction, it may not receive an allocation of the Preferred Shares in the offering for a number of reasons described below. You should consider all the information in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference in determining whether to submit a bid, the number of Preferred Shares you seek to purchase and the price per share you are willing to pay.

The following brokers have agreed to be network brokers for purposes of the auction process: BB&T Capital Markets, a division of Scott & Stringfellow, LLC, Blaylock Robert Van, LLC, Boenning & Scattergood,





## **Table of Contents**

Inc., Cabrera Capital Markets, LLC, Cantor Fitzgerald & Co., CastleOak Securities, L.P., Compass Point Research & Trading, LLC, D.A. Davidson & Co., Davenport & Co., FBR Capital Markets & Co., Guggenheim Securities, Janney Montgomery Scott LLC, Jefferies & Company, Inc., Joseph Gunnar & Co. LLC, Keefe, Bruyette & Woods, Inc., Lebenthal & Co., LLC, M.R. Beal & Company, Raymond James & Associates, Inc., Samuel A. Ramirez & Co., Sterne, Agee & Leach, Inc., Stifel, Nicolaus & Company, Incorporated, The Williams Capital Group, L.P., Toussaint Capital Partners, LLC, Wedbush Morgan Securities Inc. and WR Hambrecht + Co., LLC. The network brokers will not share in any underwriting discounts or fees paid by us in connection with the offering of the Preferred Shares but may, subject to applicable FINRA and SEC rules and regulations, charge a separate commission to their own customers.

## **The Auction Process**

The following describes how the auction agents will conduct the auction process:

### ***General***

The auction will commence at 8:30 a.m., New York City time, on the date specified by the auction agents in a press release issued prior to the opening of the equity markets on such day, and will end at 6:30 p.m., New York City time, on the second business day immediately thereafter (the submission deadline). Unless you submit your bids through an auction agent, your broker will have an earlier deadline for accepting bids. If a malfunction, technical or mechanical problem, calamity, crisis or other similar event occurs that the auction agents believe may interfere with the auction process, the auction agents may (in consultation with Treasury) decide to extend the auction or cancel and reschedule the auction. The auction agents and the network brokers will advise bidders of any such decision to extend or cancel and reschedule the auction using e-mail, telephone or facsimile, and will attempt to make such notification prior to the time the auction is scheduled to close. If the auction process is extended such that it closes at a later time on the same business day, any bids previously submitted will continue to be valid unless amended or cancelled by the bidder, but if the auction is extended such that it closes on the following business day or later, or is cancelled, all bids will be cancelled at the time of such extension or cancellation.

The auction agents and the network brokers will contact potential investors with information about the auction process and how to participate and will solicit bids from prospective investors via electronic message, telephone and facsimile. The minimum bid price is \$763.50 per Preferred Share with a minimum size for any bid of one Preferred Share.

### ***The Bidding Process***

The auction agents and the network brokers will only accept bids in the auction process in increments of whole Preferred Shares; no fractional interests will be sold.

No maximum price or auction price range has been established in connection with the auction process, which means that there is no ceiling on the price per share that you or any other bidder can bid in the auction. Each bid must specify a price at or above the minimum bid price of \$763.50 (such bid price to be in increments of \$0.01) with a minimum bid size of one Preferred Share or such bid will be rejected.

Once the auction begins, you may submit your bids either directly through an auction agent or through any network broker. Bids through the network brokers will be aggregated and submitted to the auction agents as single bids at each price increment by those brokers. Bids will only be accepted if they are made on an unconditional basis (*i.e.*, no all-or-none bids will be accepted).

In connection with submitting a bid, you will be required to provide the following information:

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the number of Preferred Shares that you are interested in purchasing (only in whole shares no fractional interests);

S-32

**Table of Contents**

the price per share you are willing to pay (such bid price to be in increments of \$0.01) at or above the minimum bid price of \$763.50 per Preferred Share with a minimum size for any bid of one Preferred Share; and

any additional information that may be required to enable an auction agent and/or network broker to identify you, confirm your eligibility and suitability for participating in this offering, and, if you submit a successful bid, consummate a sale of Preferred Shares to you.

You may submit multiple bids. Canceling one bid does not cancel any other bid. However, as bids are independent, each bid may result in an allocation of Preferred Shares. Consequently, the sum of your bid sizes should be no more than the total number of Preferred Shares you are willing to purchase. In addition, the auction agents may impose size limits on the aggregate size of bids that they choose to accept from any bidder (including any network broker), although the auction agents are under no obligation to do so or to reconfirm bids for any reason, except as may be required by applicable securities laws.

At any time prior to the submission deadline, you may modify your bids to increase or decrease the number of Preferred Shares bid for or the price bid per share and may withdraw your bid and reenter the auction. Network brokers, however, will impose earlier submission deadlines than that imposed by the auction agents in order to have sufficient time to aggregate bids received from their respective customers and to transmit the aggregate bid to the auction agents before the auction closes. If you are bidding through a network broker, or another broker that is submitting bids through an auction agent or a network broker, you should be aware of any earlier submission deadlines that may be imposed by your broker.

Conditions for valid bids, including eligibility standards and account funding requirements, may vary from broker to broker. Some brokers, for example, may require a prospective investor to maintain a minimum account balance or to ensure that its account balance is equal to or in excess of the amount of its bid. No funds will be transferred to the underwriters until the acceptance of the bid and the allocation of Preferred Shares.

A bid received by an auction agent or any network broker involves no obligation or commitment of any kind prior to the submission deadline. Therefore, you will be able to withdraw a bid at any time prior to the submission deadline (or any deadline imposed by a network broker, if you are bidding through a network broker). Following the submission deadline, however, all bids that have not been modified or withdrawn by you prior to the submission deadline will be considered final and irrevocable and may be accepted. The auction agents and Treasury will rely on your bid in setting the public offering price and in sending notices of acceptance to successful bidders.

If you are requested to reconfirm a bid and fail to do so in a timely manner, the auction agents may deem your bid to have been withdrawn. The auction agents may, however, choose to accept your bid even if it has not been reconfirmed.

The auction agents may reject any bid that they determine, in their discretion, has a potentially manipulative, disruptive or other adverse effect on the auction process or the offering.

The auction agents will not provide bidders with any information about the bids of other bidders or auction trends, or with advice regarding bidding strategies, in connection with the auction process.

No funds will be transferred to the underwriters until the acceptance of the bid and the allocation of the Preferred Shares. However, the auction agents or any network broker may require you to deposit funds or securities in your brokerage accounts with value sufficient to cover the aggregate dollar amount of your bids. Bids may be rejected if you do not provide the required funds or securities



## **Table of Contents**

within the required time. The auction agents or any network broker may, however, decide to accept successful bids regardless of whether you have deposited funds or securities in your brokerage accounts. In any case, if you are a successful bidder, you will be obligated to purchase the Preferred Shares allocated to you in the allocation process and will be required to deposit funds in your brokerage accounts prior to settlement, which is expected to occur three or four business days after the notices of acceptance are sent to you.

### ***Pricing and Allocation***

The auction agents will manage the master order book that will aggregate all bids and will include the identity of the bidders (or their brokers, in the case of bids submitted through a network broker). The master order book will not be available for viewing by bidders. Bidders whose bids are accepted will be informed about the result of their bids.

If valid, irrevocable bids are received for 100% or more of the offered Preferred Shares, the clearing price will be equal to the highest price at which all of the offered Preferred Shares can be sold in the auction. In this case, the clearing price will be determined based on the number of valid, irrevocable bids at the time of the submission deadline that Treasury decides, in its sole discretion, to accept (it being understood that Treasury must accept bids for 100% of the offered Preferred Shares if it accepts any bid). If valid, irrevocable bids for 100% or more of the offered Preferred Shares are received, any accepted bids submitted in the auction above the clearing price will receive allocations in full, while each bid submitted at the clearing price will be allocated the number of Preferred Shares represented by such bids, in the case bids for 100% of the offered Preferred Shares are received, or a number of Preferred Shares approximately equal to the pro-rata allocation percentage multiplied by the number of Preferred Shares represented by such bid, rounded to the nearest whole number of Preferred Shares (subject to rounding to eliminate odd-lots), in the case bids for more than 100% of the offered Preferred Shares are received.

If valid, irrevocable bids are received for at least half, but less than all, of the offered Preferred Shares at the submission deadline, then Treasury may (but is not required to) sell, at the minimum bid price in the auction (which will be deemed the clearing price), the number of Preferred Shares it chooses to sell up to the number of bids received in the auction, so long as at least half of the offered Preferred Shares are sold, and in such a case if Treasury chooses to sell fewer Preferred Shares than the number of Preferred Shares for which bids were received, then all bids will experience equal pro-rata allocation.

If bids are received for less than half of the offered Preferred Shares, Treasury will not sell any Preferred Shares in this offering.

Unless Treasury decides not to sell any Preferred Shares or as otherwise described below, all Preferred Shares will be sold to bidders at the clearing price plus accrued dividends thereon.

Promptly after the auction agents determine the clearing price, they will communicate that clearing price to Treasury. Treasury may decide not to sell any Preferred Shares after the clearing price is determined or, in the case where bids are reserved for at least half, but less than all, of the offered Preferred Shares, may decide to sell only a portion (but not less than half) of the offered Preferred Shares. Once Treasury confirms its acceptance of the clearing price and the number of Preferred Shares to be sold, the auction agents will confirm allocations of Preferred Shares to its clients and the network brokers. The underwriters will sell all Preferred Shares at the same price per share plus accrued dividends.

If Treasury elects to sell Preferred Shares in the offering, allocation of the Preferred Shares will be determined by, first, allocating Preferred Shares to any bids made above the clearing price, and second, allocating Preferred Shares (on a pro-rata basis, if appropriate) among bids made at the

## **Table of Contents**

clearing price. Any pro-rata allocation percentage for bids made at the clearing price will be determined by dividing the number of Preferred Shares to be allocated at the bidding increment equal to the clearing price by the number of Preferred Shares represented by bids at that bidding increment. Each accepted bid submitted at the clearing price will be allocated a number of Preferred Shares approximately equal to the pro-rata allocation percentage multiplied by the number of Preferred Shares represented by its bid, rounded to the nearest whole number of Preferred Shares. In no case, however, will any rounded amount exceed the original bid size.

After Treasury confirms its acceptance of the clearing price and the number of Preferred Shares to be sold, the auction agents and each network broker that has submitted successful bids will notify you, in the event your bids have been accepted by Treasury, by electronic message, telephone, facsimile or otherwise that the auction has closed and that your bids have been accepted by Treasury (subject, in some cases, to pro-ration, as described in this prospectus supplement). They may also provide you with a preliminary allocation estimate, which will be subsequently followed by a final allocation and confirmation of sale. In the event your bids are not accepted, you may be notified that your bids have not been accepted. As a result of the varying delivery times involved in sending e-mails over the Internet and other methods of delivery, you may receive notices of acceptance before or after other bidders.

The clearing price and number of Preferred Shares to be sold are expected to be announced via press release on the business day following the end of the auction. The price will also be included in the notice of acceptance and the confirmation of sale that will be sent to successful bidders, and will also be included in the final prospectus supplement for the offering.

Sales to investors will be settled through your account with the broker through which your bid was submitted.

If you submit bids that are accepted by Treasury, you will be obligated to purchase the Preferred Shares allocated to you regardless of whether you are aware that the notice of acceptance of your bid has been sent. Once an underwriter has sent out a notice of acceptance and confirmation of sale, it will not cancel or reject your bid. The auction agents and Treasury will rely on your bid in setting the public offering price and in sending notices of acceptance to successful bidders. As a result, you will be responsible for paying for all of the Preferred Shares that are finally allocated to you at the public offering price.

You should carefully review the procedures of, and communications from, the institution through which you bid to purchase Preferred Shares.

## **Auction Process Developments**

You should keep in contact with the institution through which your bid has been submitted and monitor your relevant e-mail accounts, telephone and facsimile for notifications related to this offering, which may include:

**Potential Request for Reconfirmation.** The auction agents, in their sole discretion, may ask you to reconfirm your bid by directly contacting you (or your broker, if you submitted your bid through a broker other than an auction agent), although the auction agents are under no obligation to reconfirm bids for any reason, except as may be required by applicable securities laws. If you are requested to reconfirm a bid and fail to do so in a timely manner, the auction agents may deem your bid to have been withdrawn. The auction agents may, however, choose to accept your bid even if it has not been reconfirmed.

**Notice of Acceptance.** Notification as to whether any of your bids are successful and have been accepted by Treasury. This notification will include the final clearing price. If your bids have been accepted by Treasury, you will be informed about the results of the auction process.

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**Table of Contents**

**SELLING SHAREHOLDER**

The table below sets forth information concerning the resale of the Preferred Shares by Treasury. We will not receive any proceeds from the sale of any Preferred Shares sold by Treasury. Our operations are regulated by various U.S. governmental authorities, including in certain respects by Treasury. Other than through its role as a regulator and the acquisition of the Preferred Shares, Treasury has not held any position or office or had any other material relationship with us or any of our predecessors or affiliates within the past three years.

Treasury acquired the Preferred Shares as part of the Troubled Asset Relief Program, which was established pursuant to the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 ( EESA ). EESA was enacted into law on October 3, 2008 to restore confidence and stabilize the volatility in the U.S. banking system and to encourage financial institutions to increase their lending to customers and to each other.

The following description was provided by Treasury and is derived from the website of Treasury. Treasury is the executive agency of the United States government responsible for promoting economic prosperity and ensuring the financial security of the United States. Treasury is responsible for a wide range of activities, such as advising the President of the United States on economic and financial issues, encouraging sustainable economic growth and fostering improved governance in financial institutions. Treasury operates and maintains systems that are critical to the nation's financial infrastructure, such as the production of coin and currency, the disbursement of payments to the American public, revenue collection and the borrowing of funds necessary to run the federal government. Treasury works with other federal agencies, foreign governments, and international financial institutions to encourage global economic growth, raise standards of living and, to the extent possible, predict and prevent economic and financial crises. Treasury also performs a critical and far-reaching role in enhancing national security by implementing economic sanctions against foreign threats to the United States, identifying and targeting the financial support networks of national security threats and improving the safeguards of our financial systems. In addition, under the EESA, Treasury was given certain authority and facilities to restore the liquidity and stability of the financial system.

The doctrine of sovereign immunity, as limited by the FTCA, provides that claims may not be brought against the United States of America or any agency or instrumentality thereof unless specifically permitted by act of Congress. The FTCA bars claims for fraud or misrepresentation. The courts have held, in cases involving federal agencies and instrumentalities, that the United States may assert its sovereign immunity to claims brought under the federal securities laws. Thus, any attempt to assert a claim against Treasury alleging a violation of the federal securities laws, including the Securities Act and the Exchange Act, resulting from an alleged material misstatement in or material omission from this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus or the registration statement of which this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus are a part, or any other act or omission in connection with the offering to which this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus relate, likely would be barred. In addition, Treasury and its members, officers, agents, and employees are exempt from liability for any violation or alleged violation of the anti-fraud provisions of Section 10(b) of the Exchange Act by virtue of Section 3(c) thereof. The underwriters are not claiming to be agents of Treasury in this offering. Accordingly, any attempt to assert such a claim against the members, officers, agents or employees of Treasury for a violation of the Securities Act or the Exchange Act resulting from an alleged material misstatement in or material omission from this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus or the registration statement of which this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus are a part or resulting from any other act or omission in connection with the offering to which this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus relates likely would be barred. See Risk Factors Treasury is a federal agency and your ability to bring a claim against Treasury under the federal securities laws in connection with a purchase of Preferred Shares may be limited.



**Table of Contents**

The table below sets forth information with respect to the number of Preferred Shares beneficially owned by Treasury as of May 21, 2012, the number of Preferred Shares being offered by Treasury in this offering, and the number of Preferred Shares to be beneficially owned by Treasury after this offering, assuming all the Preferred Shares offered by Treasury in this offering are sold. The percentages below are calculated based on 52,000 Preferred Shares issued and outstanding as of May 21, 2012.

| Name and Address of Beneficial Owner  | Beneficial Ownership Prior to the Offering(1)(2) |         | Preferred Shares Being Offered | Beneficial Ownership After the Offering             |         |
|---|--|---------|--------------------------------|---|---------|
|   | Number of Preferred Shares Beneficially Owned(1) | Percent |                                | Number of Preferred Shares Beneficially Owned(1)(2) | Percent |
| United States Department of the Treasury<br>1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20220 | 52,000   | 100%    | 52,000                         | 0   | 0%      |

(1) In accordance with Rule 13d-3 under the Exchange Act, a person is deemed to be the beneficial owner, for purposes of this table, of any Preferred Shares over which such person has voting or investment power and of which such person has the right to acquire beneficial ownership within 60 days.

(2) Treasury also owns a warrant to purchase 698,554.05 shares of our common stock.

**Table of Contents****U.S. FEDERAL INCOME TAX CONSEQUENCES**

The following discussion summarizes the material U.S. federal income tax consequences applicable to U.S. holders and non-U.S. holders (each as defined below) with respect to the purchase, ownership and disposition of the Preferred Shares. This summary is based upon current provisions of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended from time to time (the Code), Treasury regulations and judicial and administrative authority, all of which are subject to differing interpretations or change, possibly with retroactive effect. This summary is limited to investors who will hold the Preferred Shares as capital assets and does not discuss all aspects of U.S. federal income taxation that may be important to particular investors in light of their individual circumstances. This discussion does not address the tax consequences to investors who are subject to special tax rules, such as banks and other financial institutions, insurance companies, governments and governmental entities, broker-dealers, partnerships and their partners, tax-exempt organizations, investors that will hold the Preferred Shares as part of a straddle, hedge, conversion, constructive sale, or other integrated security transaction for U.S. federal income tax purposes, U.S. expatriates, or U.S. holders that have a functional currency that is not the U.S. dollar, all of whom may be subject to tax rules that differ significantly from those summarized below. In addition, this summary does not address any alternative minimum tax consequences or any state, local or non-U.S. tax consequences. Each prospective investor is urged to consult its own tax advisors regarding the U.S. federal, state, local, and non-U.S. income and other tax considerations of the purchase, ownership, and disposition of the Preferred Shares.

For purposes of this summary, you are a U.S. holder if you are a beneficial owner of the Preferred Shares and you are for U.S. federal income tax purposes (i) an individual citizen or resident of the United States, (ii) a corporation created or organized in the United States or under the laws of the United States, any state thereof or the District of Columbia, (iii) an estate the income of which is subject to U.S. federal income taxation regardless of its source, or (iv) a trust if it (A) is subject to the primary supervision of a court within the United States and one or more U.S. persons have the authority to control all substantial decisions of the trust, or (B) has a valid election in effect under applicable U.S. Treasury regulations to be treated as a United States person. You are a non-U.S. holder if you are a beneficial owner of the Preferred Shares that is an individual, corporation, estate or trust that is not a U.S. holder.

If a partnership (including any other entity treated as a partnership for U.S. federal income tax purposes) is a holder of the Preferred Shares, the U.S. federal income tax treatment of a partner in the partnership will generally depend on the status of the partner and the activities of the partnership. If you are a partnership or a partner of a partnership holding Preferred Shares, you should consult your own tax advisors as to the particular U.S. federal income tax consequences of the purchase, ownership and disposition of the Preferred Shares.

**U.S. Holders**

**Distributions on the Preferred Shares.** In general, if distributions are made with respect to the Preferred Shares, the distributions will be treated as dividends to the extent of our current and accumulated earnings and profits as determined for U.S. federal income tax purposes. Any portion of a distribution in excess of our current and accumulated earnings and profits is treated first as a nontaxable return of capital reducing your tax basis in the Preferred Shares. Any amount in excess of your tax basis is treated as capital gain, the tax treatment of which is discussed below under Sale or Redemptions of the Preferred Shares.

Dividends received by individual holders of the Preferred Shares will generally be subject to a reduced maximum tax rate of 15% if such dividends are treated as qualified dividend income for U.S. federal income tax purposes. The rate reduction does not apply to dividends that are paid to individual stockholders with respect to Preferred Shares that are held for 60 days or less during the 121-day period beginning on the date which is 60 days before the date on which the Preferred Shares become ex-dividend. Furthermore, the rate reduction does not apply to dividends received to the extent that an individual holder elects to treat the dividends as investment income for purposes of determining the holder's limit for the deduction of investment interest under

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**Table of Contents**

Section 163(d) of the Code. The 15% dividend rate is scheduled to expire December 31, 2012, at which time the rate will revert back to ordinary income rates previously in effect and applicable to dividends unless the Code is amended to provide for a different rate. In addition, under the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010, dividends received after December 31, 2012 by U.S. holders that are individuals could be subject to the 3.8% tax on net investment income. You should consult your own tax advisors regarding the implications of these rules in light of your particular circumstances.

Dividends received by corporate holders of the Preferred Shares may be eligible for a dividends received deduction equal to 70% of the amount of the distribution, subject to applicable limitations, including limitations related to debt financed portfolio stock under Section 246A of the Code and to the holding period requirements of Section 246 of the Code. In addition, any amount received by a corporate holder that is treated as a dividend may, depending on the circumstances, constitute an extraordinary dividend subject to the provisions of Section 1059 of the Code (except as may otherwise be provided in Treasury regulations yet to be promulgated). Under Section 1059, a corporate holder that has held shares for two years or less before the dividend announcement date generally must reduce the tax basis of all of the holder's shares (but not below zero) by the non-taxed portion of any extraordinary dividend and, if the non-taxed portion exceeds the holder's tax basis for the shares, must treat any excess as gain from the sale or exchange of the shares in the year the payment is received. Individual holders of Preferred Shares that receive any extraordinary dividends that are treated as qualified dividend income (as discussed above) will be required to treat any losses on the sale of such Preferred Shares as long-term capital losses to the extent of such dividends. We strongly encourage you to consult your own tax advisor regarding the extent, if any, to which these provisions may apply to you in light of your particular facts and circumstances.

***Sale or Redemption of the Preferred Shares.*** On the sale or exchange of the Preferred Shares to a party other than us, you generally will realize capital gain or loss in an amount equal to the difference between (a) the amount of cash and the fair market value of any property you receive on the sale and (b) your tax basis in the Preferred Shares. We strongly encourage you to consult your own tax advisors regarding applicable rates, holding periods and netting rules for capital gains and losses in light of your particular facts and circumstances. Certain limitations exist on the deduction of capital losses by both corporate and non-corporate taxpayers.

On the redemption of Preferred Shares by us, your surrender of the Preferred Shares for the redemption proceeds will be treated either as a payment received upon sale or exchange of the Preferred Shares or as a distribution with respect to all of your equity interests in us. Resolution of this issue will turn on the application of Section 302 of the Code to your individual facts and circumstances.

The redemption will be treated as gain or loss from the sale or exchange of Preferred Shares (as discussed above) if:

the redemption is substantially disproportionate with respect to you within the meaning of Section 302(b)(2) of the Code;

your interest in the Preferred Shares and any other equity interest in us is completely terminated (within the meaning of Section 302(b)(3) of the Code) as a result of such redemption; or

the redemption is not essentially equivalent to a dividend (within the meaning of Section 302(b)(1) of the Code). In general, redemption proceeds are not essentially equivalent to a dividend if the redemption results in a meaningful reduction of your interest in the issuer.

In determining whether any of these tests has been met, you must take into account not only the Preferred Shares and other equity interests in us that you actually own, but also shares and other equity interests that you constructively own within the meaning of Section 318 of the Code.

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## **Table of Contents**

If none of the above tests giving rise to sale or exchange treatment is satisfied, then a payment made in redemption of the Preferred Shares will be treated as a distribution that is subject to the tax treatment described above under **Distributions on the Preferred Shares**. The amount of the distribution will be equal to the amount of cash and the fair market value of property you receive without any offset for your tax basis in the Preferred Shares. Your tax basis in the redeemed Preferred Shares should be transferred to your remaining Preferred Shares. If, however, you have no remaining Preferred Shares, your basis could be lost.

Any redemption proceeds that are attributable to any declared but unpaid dividends on the Preferred Shares will generally be subject to the rules described above under **Distributions on the Preferred Shares**.

We strongly encourage you to consult your own tax advisor regarding: (a) whether a redemption payment will qualify for sale or exchange treatment under Section 302 of the Code or, alternatively, will be characterized as a distribution; and (b) the resulting tax consequences to you in light of your individual facts and circumstances.

**Information Reporting and Backup Withholding.** Information reporting will generally apply to noncorporate U.S. holders with respect to payments of dividends on the Preferred Shares and to certain payments of proceeds on the sale or other disposition of the Preferred Shares. Certain noncorporate U.S. holders may be subject to U.S. backup withholding (currently at a rate of 28%) on payments of dividends on the Preferred Shares and certain payments of proceeds on the sale or other disposition of the Preferred Shares unless the beneficial owner of the Preferred Shares furnishes the payor or its agent with a taxpayer identification number, certified under penalties of perjury, and certain other information, or otherwise establishes, in the manner prescribed by law, an exemption from backup withholding.

U.S. backup withholding is not an additional tax. Any amounts withheld under the backup withholding rules may be allowed as a credit against a U.S. holder's U.S. federal income tax liability, which may entitle the U.S. holder to a refund, provided the U.S. holder timely furnishes the required information to the Internal Revenue Service (the **IRS**).

### **Non-U.S. Holders**

**Distributions on the Preferred Shares.** Distributions treated as dividends as described above under **U.S. Holders Distributions on the Preferred Shares** paid to a non-U.S. holder of the Preferred Shares will generally be subject to withholding of U.S. federal income tax at a 30% rate or such lower rate as may be specified by an applicable income tax treaty. However, distributions that are effectively connected with the conduct by the non-U.S. holder of a trade or business within the United States are not subject to the withholding tax, provided certain certification and disclosure requirements are satisfied. Instead, such distributions are subject to U.S. federal income tax on a net income basis in the same manner as if the non-U.S. holder were a United States person as defined under the Code, unless an applicable income tax treaty provides otherwise. Any such effectively connected dividends received by a foreign corporation may be subject to an additional **branch profits tax** at a 30% rate or such lower rate as may be specified by an applicable income tax treaty.

For purposes of obtaining a reduced rate of withholding under an income tax treaty or an exemption from withholding for dividends effectively connected to a U.S. trade or business, a non-U.S. holder will generally be required to provide a U.S. taxpayer identification number as well as certain information concerning the holder's country of residence and entitlement to tax benefits. A non-U.S. holder can generally meet the certification requirements by providing a properly executed IRS Form W-8BEN (if the holder is claiming the benefits of an income tax treaty) or Form W-8ECI (if the dividends are effectively connected with a trade or business in the United States) or suitable substitute form.

**Sale or Redemption of the Preferred Shares.** A non-U.S. holder generally will not be subject to U.S. federal income or withholding tax on gain realized on the sale, exchange, redemption (except as discussed below) or other disposition of the Preferred Shares except for (i) certain non-resident alien individuals that are present in

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**Table of Contents**

the United States for 183 or more days in the taxable year of the sale or disposition, (ii) gain that is effectively connected with the conduct by the non-U.S. holder of a trade or business within the United States (and, if a tax treaty applies, is attributable to a permanent establishment maintained by the non-U.S. holder in the United States), (iii) non-U.S. holders that are subject to tax pursuant to certain provisions of U.S. federal income tax law applicable to certain expatriates, and (iv) gain if we are or have been a United States real property holding corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes.

We would not be treated as a United States real property holding corporation if less than 50% of our assets throughout a prescribed testing period consist of interests in real property located within the United States, excluding, for this purpose, interest in real property solely in a capacity as a creditor. To the extent that we are or have been a United States real property holding corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes and a non-U.S. holder was not eligible for a treaty exemption, any gain on the sale of our Preferred Shares would be treated as effectively connected with a trade or business within the United States and the purchaser of the stock could be required to withhold 10% of the purchase price and remit such amount to the IRS. Gain that is treated as effectively connected with a trade or business within the United States will be subject to U.S. federal income tax on a net income basis in the same manner as if the non-U.S. holder was a United States person as defined under the Code, unless an applicable income tax treaty provides otherwise. Any such effectively connected income received by a foreign corporation may be subject to an additional branch profits tax at a 30% rate or such lower rate as may be specified by an applicable income tax treaty.

We believe that we are not currently and do not anticipate becoming a United States real property holding corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes.

A payment made to a non-U.S. holder in redemption of the Preferred Shares may be treated as a dividend, rather than as a payment in exchange for such stock, in the circumstances discussed above under U.S. Holders Sale or Redemption of the Preferred Shares, in which event such payment would be subject to tax as discussed above under Distributions on the Preferred Shares. Prospective investors should consult their own tax advisors to determine the proper tax treatment of any payment received in redemption of the Preferred Shares.

***Information Reporting and Backup Withholding.*** Information returns will be filed with the IRS reporting payments of dividends on the Preferred Shares and the amount of tax, if any, withheld with respect to those payments. Copies of information returns reporting such dividends and withholding may also be made available to the tax authorities in the country in which a non-U.S. holder resides under the provisions of an applicable income tax treaty. Unless the non-U.S. holder complies with certification procedures to establish that it is not a U.S. person, information returns may be filed with the IRS in connection with the proceeds from a sale or other disposition of the Preferred Shares and the non-U.S. holder may be subject to U.S. backup withholding on dividend payments on the Preferred Shares or on the proceeds from a sale or other disposition of the Preferred Shares. Satisfaction of the certification procedures required to claim a reduced rate of withholding under a treaty described above in the section titled Distributions on the Preferred Shares will satisfy the certification requirements necessary to avoid backup withholding as well. The amount of any backup withholding from a payment to a non-U.S. holder will be allowed as a credit against such holder's U.S. federal income tax liability and may entitle such holder to a refund, provided that the required information is timely furnished to the IRS. Non-U.S. holders are urged to consult their own tax advisors regarding the application of backup withholding in their particular circumstances and the availability of and procedure for obtaining an exemption from backup withholding under current Treasury regulations.

**New Legislation Relating to Foreign Accounts**

Legislation enacted in 2010 may impose withholding taxes on certain types of payments made to foreign financial institutions and certain other non-U.S. entities after December 31, 2012. The legislation generally imposes a 30% withholding tax on dividends on or gross proceeds from the sale or other disposition of

**Table of Contents**

Preferred Shares paid to a foreign financial institution unless the foreign financial institution enters into an agreement with Treasury to, among other things, undertake to identify accounts held by certain U.S. persons or U.S.-owned foreign entities, annually report certain information about such accounts, and withhold 30% on payments to account holders whose actions prevent it from complying with these reporting and other requirements. In addition, the legislation generally imposes a 30% withholding tax on the same types of payments to a foreign non-financial entity unless the entity certifies that it does not have any substantial U.S. owners or furnishes identifying information regarding each substantial U.S. owner. Under recently issued IRS guidance, these rules generally would apply to payments of dividends on the Preferred Shares made after December 31, 2013, and payments of gross proceeds from a disposition of the Preferred Shares made after December 31, 2014. Prospective investors should consult their tax advisors regarding this legislation.

S-42

**Table of Contents**

**UNDERWRITING**

Treasury is offering the Preferred Shares through Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated and Sandler O'Neill & Partners, L.P. as representatives of the several underwriters. The terms and conditions set forth in the underwriting agreement, dated June 1, 2012, govern the sale and purchase of the Preferred Shares. Each underwriter named below has severally agreed to purchase from Treasury, and Treasury has agreed to sell to such underwriter, the number of Preferred Shares set forth opposite the name of each underwriter below at the public offering price less the underwriting discounts set forth on the cover page of this prospectus supplement.

| Underwriter  | Number of Preferred Shares |
|--|----------------------------|
| Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated |                            |
| Sandler O'Neill & Partners, L.P.                   |                            |
| C.L. King & Associates, Inc.                       |                            |
| Guzman & Company                                   |                            |
| Mischler Financial Group, Inc.                     |                            |
| Total  |                            |

The underwriting agreement provides that the obligations of the several underwriters to purchase the Preferred Shares offered hereby are subject to certain conditions precedent and that the underwriters will purchase all of the Preferred Shares that Treasury determines to sell, if any are purchased. The number of Preferred Shares that Treasury may determine to sell will depend, in part, upon the success of the auction process. See Auction Process The Auction Process Pricing and Allocation.

The underwriters plan to offer the Preferred Shares for sale pursuant to the auction process described above under Auction Process. Preferred Shares sold by the underwriters to the public will be sold at the clearing price determined through that auction process plus accrued dividends thereon. During the auction period, bids may be placed for Preferred Shares at any price in increments of \$0.01. The offering of the Preferred Shares by the underwriters is subject to receipt and acceptance and subject to the underwriters' right to reject any order in whole or in part. As described under Auction Process, Treasury may decide not to sell any Preferred Shares in the auction process, regardless of the clearing price set in the auction process.

The underwriters are committed to purchase and pay for all such Preferred Shares, if any are purchased. The underwriting agreement also provides that if an underwriter defaults, the purchase commitments of non-defaulting underwriters may also be increased or this offering may be terminated. The underwriting agreement provides that the obligations of the underwriters are conditional and may be terminated at their discretion based on their assessment of the state of the financial markets. The obligations of the underwriters may also be terminated upon the occurrence of the events specified in the underwriting agreement.

The following table shows the per share and total underwriting discounts and commissions that the underwriters will receive and the proceeds Treasury will receive.

| Preferred Stock  | Per Share | Total |
|--|-----------|-------|
| Price to public(1)   | \$        | \$    |
| Underwriting discounts and commissions to be paid by Treasury(2) |           |       |
| Proceeds to Treasury(1)  |           |       |

(1) Plus accrued dividends from and including May 15, 2012.

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- (2) Treasury has agreed to pay all underwriting discounts and commissions and transfer taxes. We have agreed to pay all transaction fees, if any, applicable to the sale of the Preferred Shares and certain fees and disbursements of counsel for Treasury incurred in connection with this offering.

S-43



## **Table of Contents**

We estimate that the total expenses of this offering, other than the underwriting discounts and commissions and transfer taxes, if any, will be approximately \$ \_\_\_\_\_ and are payable by us.

### **Restriction on Sales of Securities**

We and Treasury have agreed, for the period beginning on and including the date of this prospectus supplement through and including the date that is 30 days after the date of this prospectus supplement, that we will not, without the prior written consent of the representatives, (i) directly or indirectly, offer, pledge, sell, contract to sell, sell any option or contract to purchase, purchase any option or contract to sell, grant any option, right or warrant to purchase or otherwise transfer or dispose of any shares of preferred stock or any securities convertible into, or exercisable or exchangeable, for preferred stock or file any registration statement under the 1933 Act with respect to any of the foregoing or (ii) enter into any swap or any other agreement or any transaction that transfers, in whole or in part, directly or indirectly, the economic consequence of ownership of preferred stock.

The restrictions described in the immediately preceding paragraph will not apply to sales by Treasury of any of our Preferred Shares back to us. The underwriters may, in their sole discretion and at any time and from time to time, without notice, release all or any portion of the Preferred Shares and other securities from the foregoing restrictions.

### **Indemnity**

We have agreed to indemnify Treasury and the underwriters and persons who control the underwriters against certain liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act, and to contribute to payments that the underwriters may be required to make in respect of these liabilities.

### **Stabilization**

In connection with this offering, the underwriters may engage in stabilizing transactions.

Stabilizing transactions permit bids to purchase Preferred Shares so long as the stabilizing bids do not exceed a specified maximum, and are engaged in for the purpose of preventing or retarding a decline in the market price of Preferred Shares while this offering is in progress.

These stabilizing transactions may have the effect of raising or maintaining the market price of our Preferred Shares or preventing or retarding a decline in the market price of our Preferred Shares. As a result, the price of our Preferred Shares in the open market may be higher than it would otherwise be in the absence of these transactions. Neither we nor the underwriters make any representation or prediction as to the effect that the transactions described above may have on the price of our Preferred Shares. These transactions may be effected in the open market or otherwise and, if commenced, may be discontinued at any time.

### **Listing**

The Preferred Shares will not be listed for trading on any stock exchange or available for quotation on any national quotation system.

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**Table of Contents**

**Selling Restrictions**

*United Kingdom*

Each underwriter shall be deemed to have represented, warranted and agreed that:

it has only communicated or caused to be communicated and will only communicate or cause to be communicated an invitation or inducement to engage in investment activity (within the meaning of Section 21 of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (the FSMA )) received by it in connection with the issue or sale of the Preferred Shares in circumstances in which Section 21(1) of the FSMA does not apply to our company; and

it has complied and will comply with all applicable provisions of the FSMA with respect to anything done by it in relation to the Preferred Shares in, from or otherwise involving the United Kingdom.

This prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus are only being distributed to, and is only directed at, (i) persons who are outside the United Kingdom or (ii) investment professionals falling within Article 19(5) of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (Financial Promotion) Order 2005 (the Order ) or (iii) high net worth companies, unincorporated associations and other persons, falling within Article 49(2)(a) to (d) of the Order or (iv) other persons to whom it may be lawfully communicated in accordance with the Order (all such persons together being referred to as relevant persons ). The Preferred Shares are only available to, and investment activity will only be engaged in with, relevant persons. Any person that is not a relevant person should not act or rely on this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus or either of their respective contents.

*European Economic Area*

In relation to each Member State of the European Economic Area (the EEA ) that has implemented the Prospectus Directive (each, a Relevant Member State ), an offer to the public of any Preferred Shares that are the subject of the offering contemplated in this prospectus supplement may not be made in that Relevant Member State, except that an offer to the public in that Relevant Member State of any Preferred Shares may be made at any time under the following exemptions under the Prospectus Directive, if they have been implemented in that Relevant Member State:

- (a) at any time to any legal entity which is a qualified investor as defined in the Prospectus Directive;
- (b) at any time to fewer than 100 or, if the Relevant Member State has implemented the relevant provisions of the 2010 PD Amending Directive, 150 natural or legal persons (other than qualified investors, as defined in the Prospectus Directive), as permitted under the Prospectus Directive, subject to obtaining the prior consent of the underwriters; or
- (c) in any other circumstances falling within Article 3(2) of the Prospectus Directive, provided that no such offer of the Preferred Shares shall result in a requirement for us or the underwriters to publish a prospectus pursuant to Article 3 of the Prospectus Directive.

For the purposes of this provision, the expression an offer to the public of any Preferred Shares in relation to the Preferred Shares in any Relevant Member State means the communication in any form and by any means of sufficient information on the terms of the offer and the Preferred Shares to be offered so as to enable an investor to decide to purchase the Preferred Shares, as the same may be varied in that Relevant Member State by any measure implementing the Prospectus Directive in that Relevant Member State, the expression Prospectus Directive means Directive 2003/71/EC (and amendments thereto, including the 2010 PD Amending Directive, to the extent implemented in the Relevant Member State) and includes any relevant implementing measure in each Relevant Member State and the expression 2010 PD Amending Directive means Directive 2010/73/EU.

**Table of Contents**

**Conflict of Interest; Other Relationships**

From time to time, the underwriters and their affiliates have provided, and may continue to provide, investment banking and other financial advisory services to us in the ordinary course of their businesses, and have received, and may continue to receive, compensation for such services.

In the ordinary course of their various business activities, the underwriters and their respective affiliates may make or hold a broad array of investments and actively trade debt and equity securities (or related derivative securities) and financial instruments (including bank loans) for their own account and for the accounts of their customers, and such investment and securities activities may involve securities and/or instruments of the Company. The underwriters and their respective affiliates may also make investment recommendations and/or publish or express independent research views in respect of such securities or instruments and may at any time hold, or recommend to clients that they acquire, long and/or short positions in such securities and instruments.

**Table of Contents**

**SUPERVISION AND REGULATION**

We are extensively regulated under federal and state law. Generally, these laws and regulations are intended to protect depositors and not shareholders. The following is a summary of certain provisions of certain laws that affect the regulation of bank holding companies and banks. The discussion is qualified in its entirety by reference to applicable laws and regulations. Changes in such laws and regulations may have a material effect on our business and prospects.

**Bank Regulatory Enforcement Authority**

The federal bank regulatory agencies have broad authority to issue orders to depository institutions and their holding companies prohibiting activities that constitute violations of law, rule, regulation, or administrative order, or that represent unsafe or unsound banking practices. The federal bank regulatory agencies also are empowered to require affirmative actions to correct any violation or practice; issue administrative orders that can be judicially enforced; direct increases in capital; limit dividends and distributions; restrict growth; assess civil money penalties against institutions or individuals who violate any laws, regulations, orders, or written agreements with the agencies; order termination of certain activities of holding companies or their nonbank subsidiaries; remove officers and directors; order divestiture of ownership or control of a nonbanking subsidiary by a holding company; terminate deposit insurance and appoint a conservator or receiver.

For additional information about the laws and regulations applicable to us, see **Supervision and Regulation** in Part I, Item 1 of our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011, which information is incorporated by reference herein.

**LEGAL MATTERS**

The validity of the Preferred Shares offered by this prospectus supplement and certain other legal matters will be passed upon for us by Rogers & Hardin LLP, Atlanta, Georgia. The underwriters are represented by Sidley Austin LLP, New York, New York.

**EXPERTS**

Our consolidated financial statements as of December 31, 2011 and 2010 and for each of the years in the three-year period ended December 31, 2011 have been incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus in reliance upon the report of Porter Keadle Moore, LLC, registered independent public accountants, incorporated by reference herein and therein and upon the authority of said firm as experts in accounting and auditing.

**Table of Contents**

**PROSPECTUS**

**52,000 SHARES OF FIXED RATE CUMULATIVE PERPETUAL PREFERRED STOCK, SERIES A**

This prospectus relates to the potential resale from time to time by selling securityholders of some or all of the shares of our Fixed Rate Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series A. In this prospectus, we refer to the shares of our Fixed Rate Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series A as series A preferred stock. The series A preferred stock was originally issued by us pursuant to the Letter Agreement dated November 21, 2008, and the related Securities Purchase Agreement Standard Terms, between us and the United States Department of the Treasury, or the Treasury, which we refer to as the initial selling securityholder, in a transaction exempt from the registration requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, or the Securities Act.

The initial selling securityholder and its successors, including transferees, which we collectively refer to as the selling securityholders, may offer shares of the series A preferred stock from time to time directly or through underwriters, broker-dealers or agents and in one or more public or private transactions and at fixed prices, at prevailing market prices, at prices related to prevailing market prices or at negotiated prices. If the series A preferred stock is sold through underwriters, broker-dealers or agents, the selling securityholders will be responsible for underwriting discounts or commissions or agents' commissions.

We will not receive any proceeds from the sale of series A preferred stock by the selling securityholders.

The series A preferred stock is not listed on an exchange, and, unless requested by the initial selling securityholder, we do not intend to list the series A preferred stock on any exchange.

**Investing in our securities involves a high degree of risk. Before buying our securities, you should carefully consider the risk factors discussed in the section entitled Risk Factors beginning on page 1 of this prospectus and in the sections entitled Risk Factors in our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K and in any Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q, as well as in any prospectus supplement related to the specific offerings.**

Our principal executive offices are located at 310 First St., S.E., Moultrie, Georgia 31768, and our telephone number is (229) 890-1111. Our Internet address is <http://www.amerisbank.com>.

**Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or passed upon the adequacy or accuracy of this prospectus. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.**

The date of this prospectus is May 3, 2012.

**Table of Contents**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|  | <b>Page</b> |
|--|-------------|
| <u>About This Prospectus</u>   | i           |
| <u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>  | i           |
| <u>Risk Factors</u>  | 1           |
| <u>Use of Proceeds</u>   | 10          |
| <u>Ratio of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock Dividends</u> | 10          |
| <u>Description of Series A Preferred Stock</u>                                   | 11          |
| <u>Plan of Distribution</u>  | 16          |
| <u>Selling Securityholders</u>   | 18          |
| <u>Legal Matters</u>   | 19          |
| <u>Experts</u>   | 19          |
| <u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>                                       | 19          |
| <u>Information Incorporated by Reference</u>                                     | 20          |

---

**Table of Contents**

**ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS**

This prospectus is part of a registration statement we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or the SEC, using a shelf registration process. Under this shelf registration process, the selling securityholders may, from time to time, offer and sell, in one or more offerings, the series A preferred stock described in this prospectus.

We may provide a prospectus supplement at any time to add, update or change information in this prospectus. If the information in this prospectus is inconsistent with a prospectus supplement, you should rely on the information in that prospectus supplement. You should read both this prospectus and, if applicable, any prospectus supplement. See the section entitled "Where You Can Find More Information" for more information.

In this prospectus, Ameris Bancorp, Ameris, we, our, ours and us refer to Ameris Bancorp, which is a financial holding company headquartered in Moultrie, Georgia, and its subsidiaries on a consolidated basis, unless the context otherwise requires. References to Bank mean Ameris Bank, which is our principal bank subsidiary.

**FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS**

This prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference contain statements that are considered forward looking statements within the meaning of United States securities laws. In addition, Ameris and its management may make other written or oral communications from time to time that contain forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements, including statements about industry trends, management's future expectations and other matters that do not relate strictly to historical facts, are based on assumptions by management, and are often identified by such forward-looking terminology as expect, look, believe, anticipate, estimate, seek, may, will, trend, target and goal or similar variations of such terms. Forward-looking statements may include, among other things, statements about Ameris's confidence in its strategies and its expectations about financial performance, market growth, market and regulatory trends and developments, acquisitions and divestitures, new technologies, services and opportunities and earnings.

Forward-looking statements are subject to various risks and uncertainties, which change over time, are based on management's expectations and assumptions at the time the statements are made, and are not guarantees of future results. Management's expectations and assumptions, and the continued validity of the forward-looking statements, are subject to change due to a broad range of factors affecting the national and global economies, the equity, debt, currency and other financial markets, as well as factors specific to Ameris and its subsidiaries, including the Bank.

Actual outcomes and results may differ materially from what is expressed in our forward-looking statements and from our historical financial results due to the factors discussed elsewhere in this prospectus or disclosed in our other SEC filings. Forward-looking statements should not be relied upon as representing our expectations or beliefs as of any date subsequent to the time this prospectus is filed with the SEC. Ameris undertakes no obligation to revise the forward-looking statements contained in this prospectus to reflect events after the time it is filed with the SEC. The factors discussed herein are not intended to be a complete summary of all risks and uncertainties that may affect our businesses. Though we strive to monitor and mitigate risk, we cannot anticipate all potential economic, operational and financial developments that may adversely impact our operations and our financial results.

Forward-looking statements should not be viewed as predictions, and should not be the primary basis upon which investors evaluate Ameris. Any investor in Ameris should consider all risks and uncertainties disclosed in our SEC filings described below under the section entitled "Where You Can Find More Information," all of which are accessible on the SEC's website at <http://www.sec.gov>.

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**Table of Contents**

**RISK FACTORS**

*An investment in our securities involves significant risks. You should carefully consider the risks and uncertainties and the risk factors set forth below in the documents and reports filed with the SEC that are incorporated by reference into this prospectus, as well as any risks described in any applicable prospectus supplement, before you make an investment decision regarding the series A preferred stock. Additional risks and uncertainties not presently known to us or that we currently deem immaterial may also affect our business operations.*

**Difficult market conditions have adversely affected the industry in which we operate.**

The capital and credit markets have been experiencing volatility and disruption for approximately four years. Declines in the housing market over this period, with falling home prices and increasing foreclosures, unemployment and under-employment, have negatively impacted the credit performance of mortgage loans and resulted in significant write-downs of asset values by financial institutions, including government-sponsored entities, as well as major commercial and investment banks. As a result of the broad based economic decline and the troubled economic conditions, financial institutions have pursued strategies that include seeking additional capital or merging with larger and stronger institutions. In some cases, financial institutions that did not pursue defensive strategies or did not succeed in those strategies, have failed. Reflecting concern about the stability of the financial markets generally and the strength of counterparties, many lenders and institutional investors have reduced or ceased providing funding to borrowers, including to other financial institutions. Additionally, the market disruptions have increased the level of commercial and consumer delinquencies, lack of consumer confidence, increased market volatility and widespread reduction of business activity generally. We do not expect that the difficult conditions in the financial markets are likely to improve materially in the near future, and we are managing Ameris with numerous defensive strategies. A worsening of the current conditions would exacerbate the adverse effects of these difficult market conditions on us and others in the financial institution industry. In particular, we may face the following risks in connection with these events:

Unreliable market conditions with significantly reduced real estate activity may adversely affect our ability to determine the fair value of the assets we hold. If we determine that a significant portion of our assets have values that are significantly below their recorded carrying value, we could recognize a material charge to earnings in the quarter during which such determination was made, our capital ratios would be affected and may result in increased regulatory scrutiny.

We may expect to face increased regulation of our industry, including as a result of the Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 or the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, also referred to as the Dodd-Frank Act. Compliance with such regulation may increase our costs and limit our ability to pursue business opportunities.

Market developments and the resulting economic pressure on consumers may affect consumer confidence levels and may cause increases in delinquencies and default rates, which, among other effects, could affect our charge-offs and provision for loan losses.

Competition in the industry could intensify as a result of the increasing consolidation of financial services companies in connection with current market conditions.

**Recent legislation and regulatory proposals in response to recent turmoil in the financial markets may materially adversely affect our business and results of operations.**

The banking industry is heavily regulated. We are subject to examinations, supervision and comprehensive regulation by various federal and state agencies. Our compliance with these regulations is costly and restricts certain of our activities. Banking regulations are primarily intended to protect the federal deposit



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**Table of Contents**

insurance fund and depositors, not shareholders. The burden imposed by federal and state regulations puts banks at a competitive disadvantage compared to less regulated competitors such as finance companies, mortgage banking companies and leasing companies. Changes in the laws, regulations and regulatory practices affecting the banking industry may increase our costs of doing business or otherwise adversely affect us and create competitive advantages for others. Federal economic and monetary policies may also affect our ability to attract deposits and other funding sources, make loans and investments and achieve satisfactory interest spreads.

The Dodd-Frank Act represents a significant overhaul of many aspects of the regulation of the financial-services industry, including new or revised regulation of such things as systemic risk, capital adequacy, deposit insurance assessments and consumer financial protection. In addition, the federal banking regulators have issued joint guidance on incentive compensation and the Treasury and the federal banking regulators have issued statements calling for higher capital and liquidity requirements for banking organizations. Complying with these and other new legislative or regulatory requirements, and any programs established thereunder, could have a material adverse impact on our results of operations, our financial condition and our ability to fill positions with the most qualified candidates available.

**Our revenues are highly correlated to market interest rates.**

Our assets and liabilities are primarily monetary in nature, and as a result, we are subject to significant risks tied to changes in interest rates. Our ability to operate profitably is largely dependent upon net interest income. In 2011, net interest income made up 81.5% of our recurring revenue. Unexpected movement in interest rates, that may or may not change the slope of the current yield curve, could cause our net interest margins to decrease, subsequently decreasing net interest income. In addition, such changes could materially adversely affect the valuation of our assets and liabilities.

At present our one-year interest rate sensitivity position is mildly liability sensitive, such that a gradual increase in interest rates during the next twelve months should have a slightly negative impact on net interest income during that period. However, as with most financial institutions, our results of operations are affected by changes in interest rates and our ability to manage this risk. The difference between interest rates charged on interest-earning assets and interest rates paid on interest-bearing liabilities may be affected by changes in market interest rates, changes in relationships between interest rate indices, and changes in the relationships between long-term and short-term market interest rates. In addition, the mix of assets and liabilities could change as varying levels of market interest rates might present our customer base with more attractive options.

**Certain changes in interest rates, inflation, deflation or the financial markets could affect demand for our products and our ability to deliver products efficiently.**

Loan originations, and potentially loan revenues, could be materially adversely impacted by sharply rising interest rates. Conversely, sharply falling rates could increase prepayments within our securities portfolio lowering interest earnings from those investments. An unanticipated increase in inflation could cause our operating costs related to salaries and benefits, technology and supplies to increase at a faster pace than revenues.

The fair market value of our securities portfolio and the investment income from these securities also fluctuate depending on general economic and market conditions. In addition, actual net investment income and/or cash flows from investments that carry prepayment risk, such as mortgage-backed and other asset-backed securities, may differ from those anticipated at the time of investment as a result of interest rate fluctuations.

**The downgrade of the U.S. credit rating and Europe's debt crisis could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and liquidity.**

Standard & Poor's lowered its long term sovereign credit rating on the United States of America from AAA to AA+ on August 5, 2011. A further downgrade or a downgrade by other rating agencies could have a

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**Table of Contents**

material adverse impact on financial markets and economic conditions in the United States and worldwide. Any such adverse impact could have a material adverse effect on our liquidity, financial condition and results of operations.

In addition, the possibility that certain European Union member states will default on their debt obligations has negatively impacted economic conditions and global markets. The continued uncertainty over the outcome of international and the European Union's financial support programs and the possibility that other European Union member states may experience similar financial troubles could further disrupt global markets. The negative impact on economic conditions and global markets could also have a material adverse effect on our liquidity, financial condition and results of operations.

**Our concentration of real estate loans subjects us to risks that could materially adversely affect our results of operations and financial condition.**

The majority of our loan portfolio is secured by real estate. As the economy has deteriorated and depressed real estate values, the collateral value of the portfolio and the revenue stream from those loans has come under stress and has required additional provision to the allowance for loan losses. Our ability to dispose of foreclosed real estate and resolve credit quality issues is dependent on real estate activity and real estate prices, both of which have been unpredictable for more than four years.

**Greater loan losses than expected may materially adversely affect our earnings.**

We, as lenders, are exposed to the risk that our customers will be unable to repay their loans in accordance with their terms and that any collateral securing the payment of their loans may not be sufficient to assure repayment. Credit losses are inherent in the business of making loans and could have a material adverse effect on our operating results. Our credit risk with respect to our real estate and construction loan portfolio will relate principally to the creditworthiness of business entities and the value of the real estate serving as security for the repayment of loans. Our credit risk with respect to our commercial and consumer loan portfolio will relate principally to the general creditworthiness of businesses and individuals within our local markets.

We make various assumptions and judgments about the collectability of our loan portfolio and provide an allowance for estimated loan losses based on a number of factors. We believe that our current allowance for loan losses is adequate. However, if our assumptions or judgments prove to be incorrect, the allowance for loan losses may not be sufficient to cover actual loan losses. We may have to increase our allowance in the future in response to the request of one of our primary banking regulators, to adjust for changing conditions and assumptions, or as a result of any deterioration in the quality of our loan portfolio. The actual amount of future provisions for loan losses cannot be determined at this time and may vary from the amounts of past provisions.

**Our business is highly correlated to local economic conditions in a geographically concentrated part of the United States.**

Unlike larger organizations that are more geographically diversified, our banking offices are primarily concentrated in select markets in Georgia, Alabama, Florida and South Carolina. As a result of this geographic concentration, our financial results depend largely upon economic conditions in these market areas. Deterioration in economic conditions in the markets we serve could result in one or more of the following:

an increase in loan delinquencies;

an increase in problem assets and foreclosures;

a decrease in the demand for our products and services; and

a decrease in the value of collateral for loans, especially real estate, in turn reducing customers' borrowing power, the value of assets associated with problem loans and collateral coverage.

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**Table of Contents**

**Our growth and financial performance may be negatively impacted if we are unable to successfully execute our growth plans.**

Economic conditions and other factors, such as our ability to identify appropriate markets for expansion, our ability to recruit and retain qualified personnel, our ability to fund earning asset growth at a reasonable and profitable level, sufficient capital to support our growth initiatives, competitive factors and banking laws, will impact our success.

We may seek to supplement our internal growth through acquisitions. We cannot predict with certainty the number, size or timing of acquisitions, or whether any such acquisition will occur at all. Our acquisition efforts have traditionally focused on targeted banking entities in markets in which we currently operate and markets in which we believe we can compete effectively. However, as consolidation of the financial services industry continues, the competition for suitable acquisition candidates may increase. We may compete with other financial services companies for acquisition opportunities, and many of these competitors have greater financial resources than we do and may be able to pay more for an acquisition than we are able or willing to pay. We also may need additional debt or equity financing in the future to fund acquisitions. We may not be able to obtain additional financing or, if available, it may not be in amounts and on terms acceptable to us. If we are unable to locate suitable acquisition candidates willing to sell on terms acceptable to us, or we are otherwise unable to obtain additional debt or equity financing necessary for us to continue making acquisitions, we would be required to find other methods to grow our business and we may not grow at the same rate we have in the past, or at all.

Generally, we must receive federal regulatory approval before we can acquire a bank or bank holding company. In determining whether to approve a proposed bank acquisition, federal bank regulators will consider, among other factors, the effect of the acquisition on the competition, financial condition and future prospects. The regulators also review current and projected capital ratios and levels, the competence, experience and integrity of management and its record of compliance with laws and regulations, the convenience and needs of the communities to be served (including the acquiring institution's record of compliance under the Community Reinvestment Act) and the effectiveness of the acquiring institution in combating money laundering activities. We cannot be certain when or if, or on what terms and conditions, any required regulatory approvals will be granted. We may also be required to sell banks or branches as a condition to receiving regulatory approval, which condition may not be acceptable to us or, if acceptable to us, may reduce the benefit of any acquisition.

In the past, we have utilized de novo branching in new and existing markets as a way to supplement our growth. De novo branching and any acquisition carry with it numerous risks, including the following:

the inability to obtain all required regulatory approvals;

significant costs and anticipated operating losses associated with establishing a de novo branch or a new bank;

the inability to secure the services of qualified senior management;

the local market may not accept the services of a new bank owned and managed by a bank holding company headquartered outside of the market area of the new bank;

economic downturns in the new market;

the inability to obtain attractive locations within a new market at a reasonable cost; and

the additional strain on management resources and internal systems and controls.

We have experienced to some extent many of these risks with our de novo branching to date.



## **Table of Contents**

### **We rely on dividends from the Bank for most of our revenue.**

Ameris is a separate and distinct legal entity from its subsidiaries. It receives substantially all of its revenue from dividends from the Bank. These dividends are the principal source of funds to pay dividends on our common stock and interest and principal on our debt. Various federal and state laws and regulations limit the amount of dividends that the Bank may pay to us. Also, our right to participate in a distribution of assets upon a subsidiary's liquidation or reorganization is subject to the prior claims of the subsidiary's creditors. In the event the Bank is unable to pay dividends to us, we may not be able to service debt, pay obligations or pay dividends on our common stock and its business, financial condition and results of operations may be materially adversely affected. Consequently, cash-based activities, including further investments in or support of, the Bank could require borrowings or additional issuances of common or preferred stock.

### **We are subject to regulation by various federal and state entities.**

We are subject to the regulations of the SEC, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (also referred to as the Federal Reserve), the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (also referred to as the FDIC) and the Georgia Department of Banking and Finance. New regulations issued by these agencies may adversely affect our ability to carry on our business activities. We are subject to various federal and state laws and certain changes in these laws and regulations may adversely affect our operations. Noncompliance with certain of these regulations may impact our business plans, including our ability to branch, offer certain products or execute existing or planned business strategies.

We are also subject to the accounting rules and regulations of the SEC and the Financial Accounting Standards Board. Changes in accounting rules could materially adversely affect the reported financial statements or our results of operations and may also require extraordinary efforts or additional costs to implement. Any of these laws or regulations may be modified or changed from time to time, and we cannot be assured that such modifications or changes will not adversely affect us.

### **We are subject to industry competition which may have an impact upon our success.**

Our profitability depends on our ability to compete successfully. We operate in a highly competitive financial services environment. Certain competitors are larger and may have more resources than we do. We face competition in our regional market areas from other commercial banks, savings and loan associations, credit unions, internet banks, finance companies, mutual funds, insurance companies, brokerage and investment banking firms, and other financial intermediaries that offer similar services. Some of our nonbank competitors are not subject to the same extensive regulations that govern us or our bank subsidiary and may have greater flexibility in competing for business.

Another competitive factor is that the financial services market, including banking services, is undergoing rapid changes with frequent introductions of new technology-driven products and services. Our future success may depend, in part, on our ability to use technology competitively to provide products and services that provide convenience to customers and create additional efficiencies in our operations.

### **Changes in the policies of monetary authorities and other government action could materially adversely affect our profitability.**

The results of our operations are affected by credit policies of monetary authorities, particularly the Federal Reserve. The instruments of monetary policy employed by the Federal Reserve include open market operations in U.S. government securities, changes in the discount rate or the federal funds rate on bank borrowings and changes in reserve requirements against bank deposits. In view of changing conditions in the national economy and in the money markets, particularly in light of the continuing threat of terrorist attacks and current U.S. military operations and other instances of unrest around the world, we cannot predict with certainty

## **Table of Contents**

possible future changes in interest rates, deposit levels, loan demand or our business and earnings. Furthermore, the actions of the U.S. government and other governments in responding to such terrorist attacks or instances of unrest may result in currency fluctuations, exchange controls, market disruption and other adverse effects.

### **We may need to rely on the financial markets to provide needed capital.**

Our common stock is listed and traded on the NASDAQ Global Select Market. Although we anticipate that our capital resources will be adequate for the foreseeable future to meet our capital requirements, at times we may depend on the liquidity of the NASDAQ market to raise equity capital. If the market should fail to operate, or if conditions in the capital markets are adverse, we may be constrained in raising capital. Downgrades in the opinions of the analysts that follow us may cause our stock price to fall and significantly limit our ability to access the markets for additional capital requirements. Should these risks materialize, our ability to further expand our operations through internal growth or acquisition may be limited.

### **We may invest or spend the proceeds of stock offerings in ways with which you may not agree and in ways that may not earn a profit.**

We may choose to use the proceeds of future stock offerings for general corporate purposes, including for possible acquisition opportunities that may become available, such as future FDIC-assisted transactions. It is not known whether suitable acquisition opportunities may become available or whether we will be able to successfully complete any such acquisitions. We may use the proceeds of an offering only to focus on sustaining our organic, or internal, growth or for other purposes. In addition, we may use all or a portion of the proceeds of an offering to support our capital. You may not agree with the ways we decide to use the proceeds of any stock offerings, and our use of the proceeds may not yield any profits.

### **We face risks related to our operational, technological and organizational infrastructure.**

Our ability to grow and compete is dependent on our ability to build or acquire the necessary operational and technological infrastructure and to manage the cost of that infrastructure while we expand. Similar to other large corporations, in our case, operational risk can manifest itself in many ways, such as errors related to failed or inadequate processes, faulty or disabled computer systems, fraud by employees or persons outside of Ameris and exposure to external events. We are dependent on our operational infrastructure to help manage these risks. In addition, we are heavily dependent on the strength and capability of our technology systems which we use both to interface with our customers and to manage our internal financial and other systems. Our ability to develop and deliver new products that meet the needs of our existing customers and attract new customers depends in part on the functionality of our technology systems. Additionally, our ability to run our business in compliance with applicable laws and regulations is dependent on these infrastructures.

We continuously monitor our operational and technological capabilities and make modifications and improvements when we believe it will be cost effective to do so. In some instances, we may build and maintain these capabilities ourselves. We also outsource some of these functions to third parties. These third parties may experience errors or disruptions that could adversely impact us and over which we may have limited control. We also face risk from the integration of new infrastructure platforms and/or new third party providers of such platforms into our existing businesses.

### **Financial services companies depend on the accuracy and completeness of information about customers and counterparties.**

In deciding whether to extend credit or enter into other transactions, we may rely on information furnished by or on behalf of customers and counterparties, including financial statements, credit reports and other financial information. We may also rely on representations of those customers, counterparties or other third parties, such as independent auditors, as to the accuracy and completeness of that information. Reliance on inaccurate or misleading financial statements, credit reports or other financial information could have a material adverse impact on our business and, in turn, our financial condition and results of operations.

## **Table of Contents**

### **Reputational risk and social factors may impact our results.**

Our ability to originate and maintain accounts is highly dependent upon customer and other external perceptions of our business practices and our financial health. Adverse perceptions regarding our business practices or our financial health could damage our reputation in both the customer and funding markets, leading to difficulties in generating and maintaining accounts as well as in financing them. Adverse developments with respect to the consumer or other external perceptions regarding the practices of our competitors, or our industry as a whole, may also adversely impact our reputation. In addition, adverse reputational impacts on third parties with whom we have important relationships may also adversely impact our reputation. Adverse impacts on our reputation, or the reputation of our industry, may also result in greater regulatory or legislative scrutiny, which may lead to laws, regulations or regulatory actions that may change or constrain the manner in which we engage with our customers and the products we offer. Adverse reputational impacts or events may also increase our litigation risk. We carefully monitor internal and external developments for areas of potential reputational risk and have established governance structures to assist in evaluating such risks in our business practices and decisions.

### **We may not be able to attract and retain skilled people.**

Our success depends, in large part, on its ability to attract and retain key people. Competition for the best people in most activities engaged in by us can be intense and we may not be able to hire people or to retain them. The unexpected loss of services of one or more of our key personnel could have a material adverse impact on our business because of their skills, knowledge of our market, years of industry experience and the difficulty of promptly finding qualified replacement personnel.

### **The FDIC has imposed a special assessment on all FDIC-insured institutions, which decreased our earnings in 2009, and future special assessments could materially adversely affect our earnings in future periods.**

In May 2009, the FDIC announced that it had voted to levy a special assessment on insured institutions in order to facilitate the rebuilding of the Deposit Insurance Fund. During 2009, we were required to pay a special assessment totaling \$1.1 million and also to prepay the assessments that would normally have been paid during 2010-2012. The FDIC has indicated that future special assessments are possible, although it has not determined the magnitude or timing of any future assessments. Any such future assessments will decrease our earnings.

### **The terms governing the issuance of the series A preferred stock to the Treasury may be changed, the effect of which may have an adverse effect on our operations.**

The terms of the Securities Purchase Agreement Standard Terms incorporated by reference therein, which we entered into with the Treasury in connection with its purchase of the series A preferred stock, provides that the Treasury may unilaterally amend any provision of the agreement to the extent required to comply with any changes in applicable federal law that may occur in the future. We have no control over any change in the terms of the transaction that may occur in the future. Such changes may place restrictions on our business or results of operation, which may adversely affect the market price of our common stock.

### **We are subject to certain risks related to FDIC-assisted transactions.**

The success of past FDIC-assisted transactions and any FDIC-assisted transaction in which we may participate in the future will depend on a number of factors, including, but not limited to, the following:

our ability to fully integrate, and to integrate successfully, the branches acquired into the Bank's operations;

**Table of Contents**

- our ability to limit the outflow of deposits held by our new customers in the acquired branches and to successfully retain and manage interest-earning assets (loans) acquired in FDIC-assisted transactions;
  
- our ability to retain existing deposits and to generate new interest-earning assets in the geographic areas previously served by the acquired banks;
  
- our ability to effectively compete in new markets in which we did not previously have a presence;
  
- our success in deploying the cash received in the FDIC-assisted transactions into assets bearing sufficiently high yields without incurring unacceptable credit or interest rate risk;
  
- our ability to control the incremental non-interest expense from the acquired branches in a manner that enables us to maintain a favorable overall efficiency ratio;
  
- our ability to retain and attract the appropriate personnel to staff the acquired branches; and

our ability to earn acceptable levels of interest and non-interest income, including fee income, from the acquired branches. As with any acquisition involving a financial institution, particularly one involving the transfer of a large number of bank branches as is often the case with FDIC-assisted transactions, there may be higher than average levels of service disruptions that would cause inconveniences or potentially increase the effectiveness of competing financial institutions in attracting our customers. Integrating the acquired branches would not be an operation of substantial size and expense that Ameris is not familiar with, but we anticipate unique challenges and opportunities because of the nature of the transaction. Integration efforts will also likely divert our management's attention and resources. It is not known whether we will be able to integrate acquired branches successfully, and the integration process could result in the loss of key employees, the disruption of ongoing business or inconsistencies in standards, controls, procedures and policies that adversely affect our ability to maintain relationships with clients, customers, depositors and employees or to achieve the anticipated benefits of the FDIC-assisted transactions. We may also encounter unexpected difficulties or costs during the integration that could materially adversely affect our earnings and financial condition, perhaps materially. Additionally, we may be unable to achieve results in the future similar to those achieved by our existing banking business, to compete effectively in the market areas previously served by the acquired branches or to manage any growth resulting from FDIC-assisted transactions effectively.

Our willingness and ability to grow the acquired branches following FDIC-assisted transactions depend on several factors, most importantly the ability to retain certain key personnel that we hire or transfer in connection with such transactions. Our failure to retain these employees could adversely affect the success of such transactions and our future growth.

**We engage in acquisitions of other businesses from time to time, including FDIC-assisted acquisitions. These acquisitions may not produce revenue or earnings enhancements or cost savings at levels or within timeframes originally anticipated and may result in unforeseen integration difficulties.**

When appropriate opportunities arise, we will engage in acquisitions of other businesses. Difficulty in integrating an acquired business or company may cause us not to realize expected revenue increases, cost savings, increases in geographic or product presence or other anticipated benefits from any acquisition. The integration could result in higher than expected deposit attrition (run-off), loss of key employees, disruption of our business or the business of the acquired company, or otherwise adversely affect our ability to maintain relationships with customers and employees or achieve the anticipated benefits of the acquisition. We are likely to need to make additional investment in equipment and personnel to manage higher asset levels and loan



## **Table of Contents**

balances as a result of any significant acquisition, which may materially adversely impact our earnings. Also, the negative effect of any divestitures required by regulatory authorities in acquisitions or business combinations may be greater than expected.

In evaluating potential acquisition opportunities, we may seek to acquire failed banks through FDIC-assisted transactions. While the FDIC may, in such transactions, provide assistance to mitigate certain risks, such as sharing in exposure to loan losses, and providing indemnification against certain liabilities, of the failed institution, we may not be able to accurately estimate our potential exposure to loan losses and other potential liabilities, or the difficulty of integration, in acquiring such institution.

Depending on the condition of any institution that we may acquire, any acquisition may, at least in the near term, materially adversely affect our capital and earnings and, if not successfully integrated following the acquisition, may continue to have such effects.

### **FDIC-assisted acquisition opportunities may not become available and increased competition may make it more difficult for us to bid on failed bank transactions on terms we consider to be acceptable.**

Our near-term business strategy includes consideration of potential acquisitions of failing banks that the FDIC plans to place in receivership. The FDIC may not place banks that meet our strategic objectives into receivership. Failed bank transactions are attractive opportunities in part because of loss-sharing arrangements with the FDIC that limit the acquirer's downside risk on the purchased loan portfolio and, apart from our assumption of deposit liabilities, we have significant discretion as to the nondeposit liabilities that we assume. In addition, assets purchased from the FDIC are marked to their fair value and in many cases there is little or no addition to goodwill arising from an FDIC-assisted transaction. The bidding process for failing banks could become very competitive, and the increased competition may make it more difficult for us to bid on terms we consider to be acceptable.

### **Changes in national and local economic conditions could lead to higher loan charge-offs in connection with past FDIC-assisted transactions, all of which may not be supported by loss-sharing agreements with the FDIC.**

Although loan portfolios acquired in past FDIC-assisted transactions have initially been accounted for at fair value, we do not yet know whether the loans we acquired will become impaired, and impairment may result in additional charge-offs to the portfolio. The fluctuations in national, regional and local economic conditions, including those related to local residential, commercial real estate and construction markets, may increase the level of charge-offs that we make to our loan portfolio, and, consequently, reduce our net income, and may also increase the level of charge-offs on the loan portfolios that we have acquired such acquisitions and correspondingly reduce our net income. These fluctuations are not predictable, cannot be controlled and may have a material adverse impact on our operations and financial condition even if other favorable events occur.

Although we have entered into loss-sharing agreements with the FDIC which provide that a significant portion of losses related to specified loan portfolios that we have acquired in connection with the FDIC-assisted transactions will be borne by the FDIC, we are not protected for all losses resulting from charge-offs with respect to those specified loan portfolios. Additionally, the loss-sharing agreements have limited terms; therefore, any charge-off of related losses that we experience after the term of the loss-sharing agreements will not be reimbursable by the FDIC and will negatively impact our net income. The loss-sharing agreements also impose standard requirements on us which must be satisfied in order to retain loss share protections.

**Table of Contents****USE OF PROCEEDS**

We will not receive any proceeds from any sale of the series A preferred stock by the selling securityholders.

**RATIO OF EARNINGS TO COMBINED FIXED CHARGES AND PREFERRED STOCK DIVIDENDS**

The following table sets forth certain information concerning our ratio of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends, both including and excluding interest on deposits, for each of the years in the five-year period ended December 31, 2011.

|  | <b>Year Ended December 31,</b> |             |             |             |             |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|  | <b>2011</b>                    | <b>2010</b> | <b>2009</b> | <b>2008</b> | <b>2007</b> |
| Including interest on deposits (1)     | 1.91                           | 0.69        | 0.14        | 0.89        | 1.32        |
| Excluding interest on deposits (1) (2) | 5.86                           | (1.23)      | (5.88)      | (0.26)      | 3.57        |

- (1) For purposes of computing the above ratios, earnings consist of net income from continuing operations before income tax provision. Fixed charges, excluding interest on deposits, consist of all interest expense and the proportion deemed representative of the interest factor of rent expense. Fixed charges, including interest on deposits, include all of such items plus interest on deposits.
- (2) For the years ended December 31, 2010, 2009 and 2008, earnings were insufficient to cover fixed charges excluding interest on deposits by \$5,744,000, \$32,180,000 and \$1,300,000, respectively.

**Table of Contents**

**DESCRIPTION OF SERIES A PREFERRED STOCK**

The following is a brief description of the terms of the series A preferred stock that may be resold by the selling securityholders. This summary does not purport to be complete in all respects. This description is subject to and qualified in its entirety by reference to our articles of incorporation, as amended, including the articles of amendment and related certificate of designation with respect to the series A preferred stock, copies of which have been filed with the SEC and are also available upon request from us.

**General**

Under our articles of incorporation, as amended, we have authority to issue up to 5,000,000 shares of preferred stock. Of such number of shares of preferred stock, 52,000 shares have been designated as Fixed Rate Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series A, all of which shares of series A preferred stock were issued to the initial selling securityholder in a transaction exempt from the registration requirements of the Securities Act. The issued and outstanding shares of series A preferred stock are validly issued, fully paid and nonassessable.

**Dividends Payable On Shares of Series A Preferred Stock**

Holders of shares of series A preferred stock are entitled to receive if, as and when declared by our board of directors or a duly authorized committee of the board, out of assets legally available for payment, cumulative cash dividends at a rate per annum of 5% per share on a liquidation preference of \$1,000 per share of series A preferred stock with respect to each dividend period from November 21, 2008 to, but excluding, February 15, 2014. From and after February 15, 2014, holders of shares of series A preferred stock are entitled to receive cumulative cash dividends at a rate per annum of 9% per share on a liquidation preference of \$1,000 per share of series A preferred stock with respect to each dividend period thereafter.

Dividends are payable quarterly in arrears on each February 15, May 15, August 15 and November 15, each a dividend payment date, starting with February 15, 2009. If any dividend payment date is not a business day, then the next business day will be the applicable dividend payment date, and no additional dividends will accrue as a result of the applicable postponement of the dividend payment date. Dividends payable during any dividend period are computed on the basis of a 360-day year consisting of twelve 30-day months. Dividends payable with respect to the series A preferred stock are payable to holders of record of shares of series A preferred stock on the date that is 15 calendar days immediately preceding the applicable dividend payment date or such other record date as the board of directors or any duly authorized committee of the board determines, so long as such record date is not more than 60 nor less than 10 days prior to the applicable dividend payment date.

If we determine not to pay any dividend or a full dividend with respect to the series A preferred stock, we are required to provide written notice to the holders of shares of series A preferred stock prior to the applicable dividend payment date.

We are subject to various regulatory policies and requirements relating to the payment of dividends, including requirements to maintain adequate capital above regulatory minimums. The Federal Reserve is authorized to determine, under certain circumstances relating to the financial condition of a bank holding company, such as us, that the payment of dividends would be an unsafe or unsound practice and to prohibit payment thereof. In addition, we are subject to Georgia state laws relating to the payment of dividends.

**Priority of Dividends**

With respect to the payment of dividends and the amounts to be paid upon liquidation, the series A preferred stock will rank:

senior to our common stock and all other equity securities designated as ranking junior to the series A preferred stock; and

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**Table of Contents**

at least equally with all other equity securities designated as ranking on a parity with the series A preferred stock, or parity stock, with respect to the payment of dividends and distribution of assets upon any liquidation, dissolution or winding-up of Ameris. So long as any shares of series A preferred stock remain outstanding, unless all accrued and unpaid dividends for all prior dividend periods have been paid or are contemporaneously declared and paid in full, no dividend whatsoever shall be paid or declared on Ameris' s common stock or other junior stock, other than a dividend payable solely in common stock. We and our subsidiaries also may not purchase, redeem or otherwise acquire for consideration any shares of our common stock or other junior stock unless we have paid in full all accrued dividends on the series A preferred stock for all prior dividend periods, other than:

purchases, redemptions or other acquisitions of our common stock or other junior stock in connection with the administration of our employee benefit plans in the ordinary course of business pursuant to a publicly announced repurchase plan up to the increase in diluted shares outstanding resulting from the grant, vesting or exercise of equity-based compensation;

purchases or other acquisitions by broker-dealer subsidiaries of Ameris solely for the purpose of market-making, stabilization or customer facilitation transactions in junior stock or parity stock in the ordinary course of its business;

purchases or other acquisitions by broker-dealer subsidiaries of Ameris for resale pursuant to an offering by Ameris of our stock that is underwritten by the related broker-dealer subsidiary;

any dividends or distributions of rights or junior stock in connection with any shareholders' rights plan or repurchases of rights pursuant to any shareholders' rights plan;

acquisition of record ownership of junior stock or parity stock for the beneficial ownership of any other person who is not Ameris or a subsidiary of Ameris, including as trustee or custodian; and

the exchange or conversion of junior stock for or into other junior stock or of parity stock for or into other parity stock or junior stock but only to the extent that such acquisition is required pursuant to binding contractual agreements entered into before November 21, 2008 or any subsequent agreement for the accelerated exercise, settlement or exchange thereof for common stock.

If we repurchase shares of series A preferred stock from a holder other than the initial selling securityholder, we must offer to repurchase a ratable portion of the series A preferred stock then held by the initial selling securityholder.

On any dividend payment date for which full dividends are not paid, or declared and funds set aside therefor, on the series A preferred stock and any other parity stock, all dividends paid or declared for payment on that dividend payment date (or, with respect to parity stock with a different dividend payment date, on the applicable dividend date therefor falling within the dividend period and related to the dividend payment date for the series A preferred stock), with respect to the series A preferred stock and any other parity stock shall be declared ratably among the holders of any such shares who have the right to receive dividends, in proportion to the respective amounts of the undeclared and unpaid dividends relating to the dividend period.

Subject to the foregoing, such dividends (payable in cash, stock or otherwise) as may be determined by our board of directors (or a duly authorized committee of the board) may be declared and paid on our common stock and any other stock ranking equally with or junior to the series A preferred stock from time to time out of any funds legally available for such payment, and the series A preferred stock shall not be entitled to participate in any such dividend.

## **Table of Contents**

### **Redemption**

After February 15, 2012, the series A preferred stock may be redeemed at any time, subject to the approval of the Federal Reserve, in whole or in part, subject to notice as described below.

In any redemption, the redemption price is an amount equal to the per share liquidation amount plus accrued and unpaid dividends to but excluding the date of redemption.

The series A preferred stock will not be subject to any mandatory redemption, sinking fund or similar provisions. Holders of shares of series A preferred stock have no right to require the redemption or repurchase of the series A preferred stock.

If fewer than all of the outstanding shares of series A preferred stock are to be redeemed, the shares to be redeemed will be selected either pro rata from the holders of record of shares of series A preferred stock in proportion to the number of shares held by those holders or in such other manner as our board of directors or a committee thereof may determine to be fair and equitable.

We will mail notice of any redemption of series A preferred stock by first class mail, postage prepaid, addressed to the holders of record of the shares of series A preferred stock to be redeemed at their respective last addresses appearing on our books. This mailing will be at least 30 days and not more than 60 days before the date fixed for redemption. Any notice mailed or otherwise given as described in this paragraph will be conclusively presumed to have been duly given, whether or not the holder receives the notice, and failure to duly give the notice by mail or otherwise, or any defect in the notice or in the mailing or provision of the notice, to any holder of series A preferred stock designated for redemption will not affect the redemption of any other series A preferred stock. Each notice of redemption will set forth the applicable redemption date, the redemption price, the place where shares of series A preferred stock are to be redeemed, and the number of shares of series A preferred stock to be redeemed (and, if less than all shares of series A preferred stock held by the applicable holder, the number of shares to be redeemed from the holder).

Shares of series A preferred stock that are redeemed, repurchased or otherwise acquired by us will revert to authorized but unissued shares of our preferred stock.

### **Liquidation Rights**

In the event that we voluntarily or involuntarily liquidate, dissolve or wind up our affairs, holders of series A preferred stock will be entitled to receive an amount per share, referred to as the total liquidation amount, equal to the fixed liquidation preference of \$1,000 per share, plus any accrued and unpaid dividends, whether or not declared, to the date of payment. Holders of the series A preferred stock will be entitled to receive the total liquidation amount out of our assets that are available for distribution to shareholders, after payment or provision for payment of our debts and other liabilities but before any distribution of assets is made to holders of our common stock or any other shares ranking, as to that distribution, junior to the series A preferred stock.

If our assets are not sufficient to pay the total liquidation amount in full to all holders of series A preferred stock and all holders of any shares of outstanding parity stock, the amounts paid to the holders of series A preferred stock and other shares of parity stock will be paid pro rata in accordance with the respective total liquidation amount for those holders. If the total liquidation amount per share of series A preferred stock has been paid in full to all holders of series A preferred stock and other shares of parity stock, the holders of our common stock or any other shares ranking, as to such distribution, junior to the series A preferred stock will be entitled to receive all of our remaining assets according to their respective rights and preferences.

For purposes of the liquidation rights, neither the sale, conveyance, exchange or transfer of all or substantially all of our property and assets, nor the consolidation or merger by us with or into any other corporation or by another corporation with or into us, will constitute a liquidation, dissolution or winding-up of our affairs.

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## **Table of Contents**

### **Voting Rights**

Except as indicated below or otherwise required by law, the holders of series A preferred stock will not have any voting rights.

***Election of Two Directors upon Non-Payment of Dividends.*** If the dividends on the series A preferred stock have not been paid for an aggregate of six quarterly dividend periods or more (whether or not consecutive), the authorized number of directors then constituting our board of directors will be increased by two. Holders of series A preferred stock, together with the holders of any outstanding parity stock with like voting rights, referred to as voting parity stock, voting as a single class, will be entitled to elect the two additional members of our board of directors, referred to as the preferred stock directors, at the next annual meeting (or at a special meeting called for the purpose of electing the preferred stock directors prior to the next annual meeting) and at each subsequent annual meeting until all accrued and unpaid dividends for all past dividend periods have been paid in full. The election of any preferred stock director is subject to the qualification that the election would not cause us to violate the corporate governance requirement of the NASDAQ Global Select Market (or any other exchange on which our securities may be listed) that listed companies must have a majority of independent directors.

Upon the termination of the right of the holders of series A preferred stock and voting parity stock to vote for preferred stock directors, as described above, the preferred stock directors will immediately cease to be qualified as directors, their term of office shall terminate immediately and the number of authorized directors of Ameris will be reduced by the number of preferred stock directors that the holders of series A preferred stock and voting parity stock had been entitled to elect. The holders of a majority of the shares of series A preferred stock and voting parity stock, voting as a class, may remove any preferred stock director, with or without cause, and the holders of a majority of the shares of series A preferred stock and voting parity stock, voting as a class, may fill any vacancy created by the removal of a preferred stock director. If the office of a preferred stock director becomes vacant for any other reason, the remaining preferred stock director may choose a successor to fill such vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term.

***Other Voting Rights.*** So long as any shares of series A preferred stock are outstanding, in addition to any other vote or consent of shareholders required by law or by our articles of incorporation, the vote or consent of the holders of at least 66 2/3% of the shares of series A preferred stock at the time outstanding, voting separately as a single class, given in person or by proxy, either in writing without a meeting or by vote at any meeting called for the purpose, shall be necessary for effecting or validating:

any amendment or alteration of our articles of incorporation to authorize or create or increase the authorized amount of, or any issuance of, any shares of, or any securities convertible into or exchangeable or exercisable for shares of, any class or series of capital stock ranking senior to the series A preferred stock with respect to payment of dividends and/or distribution of assets on any liquidation, dissolution or winding up of Ameris;

any amendment, alteration or repeal of any provision of the certificate of designations for the series A preferred stock so as to adversely affect the rights, preferences, privileges or voting powers of the series A preferred stock; or

any consummation of a binding share exchange or reclassification involving the series A preferred stock or of a merger or consolidation of Ameris with another entity, unless the shares of series A preferred stock remain outstanding following any such transaction or, if Ameris is not the surviving entity, are converted into or exchanged for preference securities and such remaining outstanding shares of series A preferred stock or preference securities have rights, preferences, privileges and voting powers that are not materially less favorable than the rights, preferences, privileges or voting powers of the series A preferred stock, taken as a whole.

**Table of Contents**

To the extent of the voting rights of the series A preferred stock, each holder of series A preferred stock will have one vote for each \$1,000 of liquidation preference to which such holder's shares of series A preferred stock are entitled.

The foregoing voting provisions will not apply if, at or prior to the time when the vote or consent would otherwise be required, all outstanding shares of series A preferred stock have been redeemed or called for redemption upon proper notice and sufficient funds have been set aside by us for the benefit of the holders of series A preferred stock to effect the redemption.

**Table of Contents**

**PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION**

The selling securityholders and their successors, including their transferees, may sell the series A preferred stock directly to purchasers or through underwriters, broker-dealers or agents, who may receive compensation in the form of discounts, concessions or commissions from the selling securityholders or the purchasers of the series A preferred stock. These discounts, concessions or commissions as to any particular underwriter, broker-dealer or agent may be in excess of those customary in the types of transactions involved.

Shares of the series A preferred stock may be sold in one or more transactions at fixed prices, at prevailing market prices at the time of sale, at varying prices determined at the time of sale or at negotiated prices. These sales may be effected in transactions, which may involve crosses or block transactions:

on any national securities exchange or quotation service on which our common stock may be listed or quoted at the time of sale, including, as of the date of this prospectus, the NASDAQ Global Select Market;

in the over-the-counter market;

in transactions otherwise than on these exchanges or services or in the over-the-counter market; or

through the writing of options, whether the options are listed on an options exchange or otherwise.

In addition, any shares of series A preferred stock that qualify for sale pursuant to Rule 144 under the Securities Act may be sold under Rule 144 rather than pursuant to this prospectus.

The selling securityholders may loan or pledge the series A preferred stock to broker-dealers that, in turn, may sell the series A preferred stock.

The aggregate proceeds to the selling securityholders from the sale of the series A preferred stock will be the purchase price of the series A preferred stock less discounts and commissions, if any.

In effecting sales, broker-dealers or agents engaged by the selling securityholders may arrange for other broker-dealers to participate. Broker-dealers or agents may receive commissions, discounts or concessions from the selling securityholders in amounts to be negotiated immediately prior to the sale.

In offering the series A preferred stock covered by this prospectus, the selling securityholders and any broker-dealers who execute sales for the selling securityholders may be deemed to be underwriters within the meaning of Section 2(a)(11) of the Securities Act in connection with such sales. Any profits realized by the selling securityholders and the compensation of any broker-dealer may be deemed to be underwriting discounts and commissions. Selling securityholders who are underwriters within the meaning of Section 2(a)(11) of the Securities Act will be subject to the prospectus delivery requirements of the Securities Act and may be subject to certain statutory and regulatory liabilities, including liabilities imposed pursuant to Sections 11, 12 and 17 of the Securities Act and Rule 10b-5 under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or the Exchange Act.

In order to comply with the securities laws of certain states, if applicable, the series A preferred stock must be sold in such jurisdictions only through registered or licensed brokers or dealers. In addition, in certain states the series A preferred stock may not be sold unless it has been registered or qualified for sale in the applicable state or an exemption from the registration or qualification requirement is available and is complied with.

The anti-manipulation rules of Regulation M under the Exchange Act may apply to sales of series A preferred stock pursuant to this prospectus and to the activities of the selling securityholders. In addition, we will





**Table of Contents**

make copies of this prospectus available to the selling securityholders for the purpose of satisfying the prospectus delivery requirements of the Securities Act, which may include delivery through the facilities of the NASDAQ Global Select Market pursuant to Rule 153 under the Securities Act.

At the time a particular offer of series A preferred stock is made, if required, a prospectus supplement will set forth the number of shares being offered and the terms of the offering, including the name of any underwriter, dealer or agent, the purchase price paid by any underwriter, any discount, commission and other item constituting compensation, any discount, commission or concession allowed or reallocated or paid to any dealer, and the proposed selling price to the public.

We do not intend to apply for listing of the series A preferred stock on any securities exchange or for inclusion of the series A preferred stock in any automated quotation system. No assurance is given as to the liquidity of the trading market, if any, for the series A preferred stock.

We have agreed to indemnify the selling securityholders against certain liabilities, including certain liabilities under the Securities Act. We have also agreed, among other things, to bear substantially all expenses (other than underwriting discounts and selling commissions) in connection with the registration and sale of the series A preferred stock covered by this prospectus.

**Table of Contents**

**SELLING SECURITYHOLDERS**

On November 21, 2008, we issued the series A preferred stock, together with a warrant to purchase 679,443 shares of our common stock, to the United States Department of the Treasury, which is the initial selling securityholder under this prospectus, in a transaction exempt from the registration requirements of the Securities Act. The initial selling securityholder, or its successors, including transferees, may from time to time offer and sell, pursuant to this prospectus or a supplement to this prospectus, any or all of the 52,000 shares of series A preferred stock (which represents beneficial ownership of 100% of the shares of series A preferred stock outstanding on the date of this prospectus) they own.

For purposes of this prospectus, we have assumed that, after completion of the offering, none of the series A preferred stock covered by this prospectus will be held by the selling securityholders.

Beneficial ownership is determined in accordance with the rules of the SEC and includes voting or investment power with respect to the series A preferred stock. To our knowledge, the initial selling securityholder has sole voting and investment power with respect to the series A preferred stock.

We do not know when or in what amounts the selling securityholders may offer the series A preferred stock for sale. The selling securityholders might not sell any or all of the series A preferred stock offered by this prospectus. Because the selling securityholders may offer all or some of the shares of series A preferred stock pursuant to this offering, and because currently no sale of any of the series A preferred stock is subject to any agreements, arrangements or understandings, we do not know the number of shares of series A preferred stock that will be held by the selling securityholders after completion of the offering.

Other than as discussed in this prospectus, the initial selling securityholder has not had a material relationship with us.

Information about the selling securityholders may change over time. Any such changed information will be set forth in supplements to this prospectus if and when necessary.

**Table of Contents**

**LEGAL MATTERS**

The validity of the series A preferred stock offered hereby will be passed upon for us by Rogers & Hardin LLP, Atlanta, Georgia.

**EXPERTS**

The consolidated financial statements of Ameris Bancorp appearing in its Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011, and the effectiveness of its internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2011, have been audited by Porter Keadle Moore, LLC, independent registered public accounting firm, as set forth in their reports thereon, included therein, and incorporated herein by reference. Such consolidated financial statements are incorporated herein by reference in reliance upon such reports given on the authority of such firm as experts in accounting and auditing.

**WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION**

We file annual, quarterly and current reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. You may read and copy, at prescribed rates, any documents we have filed with the SEC at its Public Reference Room located at 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. You may obtain information on the operation of the Public Reference Room by calling the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330. We also file these documents with the SEC electronically. You can access the electronic versions of these filings on the SEC's Internet website found at <http://www.sec.gov> and our website at: [www.amerisbank.com](http://www.amerisbank.com) (the other information contained in, or that can be accessed through, our website is not a part of this prospectus or any prospectus supplement).

**Table of Contents**

**INFORMATION INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE**

The SEC allows us to incorporate by reference into this prospectus much of the information that we file with the SEC. This means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to another document without restating the information in this document. Any information incorporated by reference into this prospectus is considered to be part of this prospectus from the date we file that document. Any information filed by us with the SEC after the date of this prospectus will automatically update and, where applicable, supersede any information contained in this prospectus or previously incorporated by reference into this prospectus.

We incorporate by reference into this prospectus the following documents or information that we previously filed with the SEC (other than, in each case, documents or information deemed to have been furnished and not filed in accordance with the SEC rules):

Our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011;

Our Proxy Statement on Schedule 14A filed on April 19, 2012; and

Our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed on January 26, 2012, February 13, 2012 and March 1, 2012.

We also incorporate by reference any future filings we make with the SEC pursuant to Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act, on or after the date of the filing of the registration statement and prior to the termination of the offering (except for information furnished to the SEC that is not deemed to be filed for purposes of the Exchange Act). Our future filings with the SEC will automatically update and supersede any inconsistent information in this prospectus.

We will provide to each person, including any beneficial owner, to whom a copy of this prospectus is delivered, a copy of any or all of the information or documents that we have incorporated by reference into this prospectus. We will provide this information upon written or oral request at no cost to the requester. You may request this information by contacting our corporate headquarters at the following address and telephone number:

Ameris Bancorp

310 First St., S.E.

Moultrie, Georgia 31768

Telephone: (229) 890-1111

Attn: Corporate Secretary

Table of Contents

**52,000 Shares of Fixed Rate Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series A**

**PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT**

*Joint Book-Running Managers*

**BofA Merrill Lynch**

**Sandler O'Neill + Partners, L.P.**

*Co-Managers*

**C.L. King & Associates**

**Guzman & Company**

**Mischler Financial Group, Inc.**

June , 2012