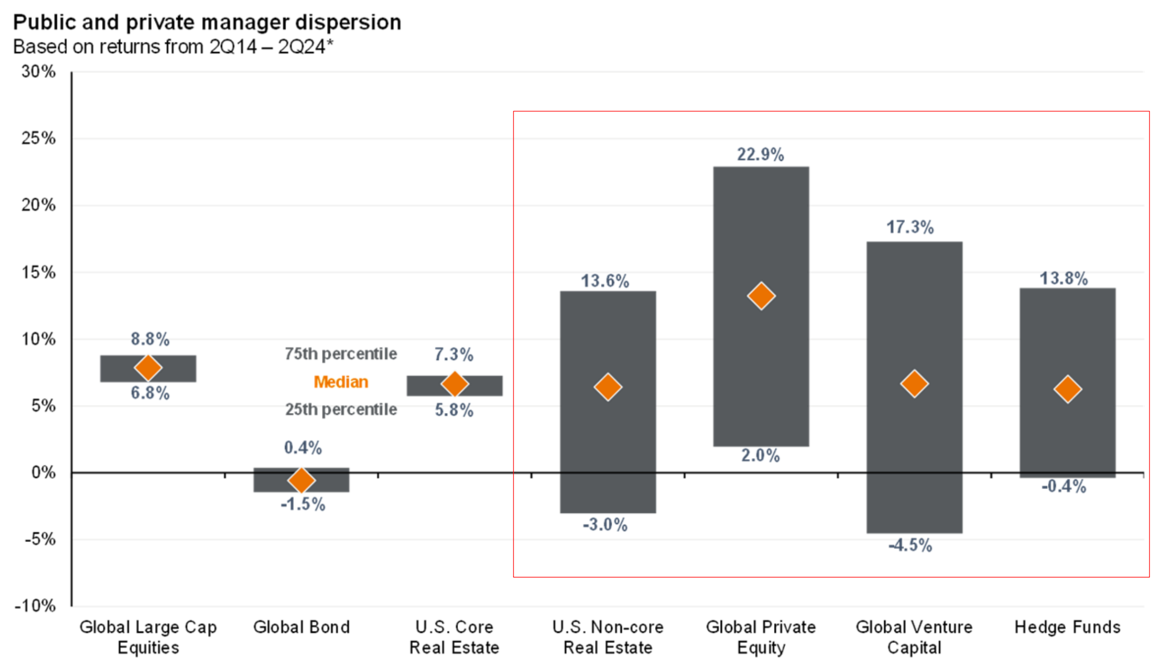
BCA Market Perspective ©
Interest Rate Cuts and Private Market Assets
October 2024

In September, the Federal Reserve lowered the federal funds rate to a range of 4.75% - 5.00%, signaling the potential for further cuts in the coming years. This raises an important question: will private market assets benefit from a lower cost of capital, leading to higher valuations?

Institutional investors typically allocate around 10% of their portfolios to private real estate, and sometimes even more to private equity. Both asset classes can be negatively impacted by rising interest rates. Unlike public markets, where prices are marked-to-market, private assets are valued on a quarterly or annual basis. This creates a lag in performance reporting. Real estate is a prime example of how similar assets in public and private markets can move in opposite directions within the same timeframe. Investors should be mindful of the wide range of returns across different private asset classes as shown to the right.



Warren Buffett famously said, “A rising tide lifts all boats. Only when the tide goes out do you discover who’s been swimming naked.” In the case of private assets, higher valuations were largely driven by cheap capital and easy access to financing. It wasn’t until this past year that we saw the consequences of overpaying for assets, with some investors now forced to sell at substantial losses.

While we are seeing some improvement in deal flow and fundamentals for both real estate and private equity, we are far from the valuations seen in 2021. Investors should temper their expectations for a quick recovery, even though there is optimism among private market participants that valuations could eventually rebound to their previous highs.

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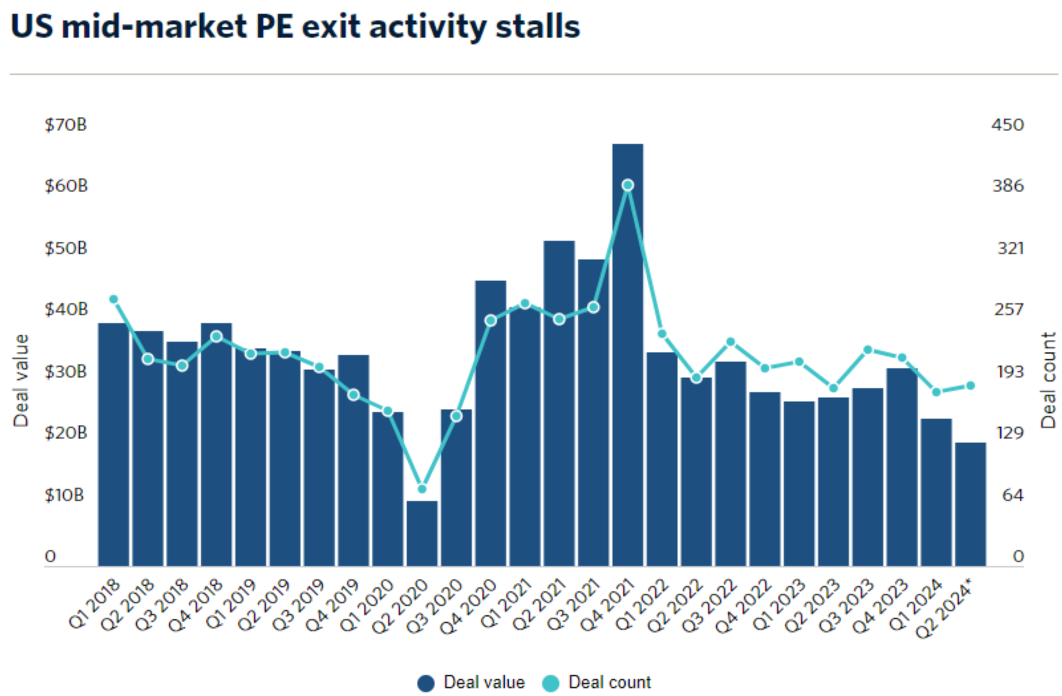

Private assets require careful consideration of comparable transactions, future growth potential, and accurate forecasting. Taking real estate as an example: while revenues may rise due to higher rents, operating expenses such as property taxes, maintenance fees, and utilities have also increased due to inflation. Additionally, tenants in the retail and office sectors, where vacancies remain high, hold significant negotiating power. Both factors, high inflation and reduced demand, have diminished the actual net operating income for landlords.

Unlike 2021, where pro-forma accounting statements were used to value the deals, acquirers of real estate properties or businesses are basing valuations on actual trailing 12-month financial statements. This could be a continued source of headwind for valuations. It should also be noted that portfolio managers are often hesitant to sell at a loss, as it could invite skepticism from their investors. However, as the portfolio managers extend the holding period in hopes that lower interest rates will boost valuations, they face the reality of reporting lower annualized returns.

Although investors remain optimistic about the potential for the Federal Reserve to reduce interest rates significantly over the next two years, the revaluation of private market assets will take time to stabilize and return to normal levels.

Source: JPM and Pitchbook.