



Fall Into Financial Confidence

As summer gives way to fall, September offers the perfect opportunity to refocus on your financial goals before the year comes to a close. With just a few months remaining in 2026, now is an ideal time to review your progress, revisit your investment strategy, and prepare for year-end financial decisions.

In this month's newsletter, you'll find a market update highlighting the latest economic trends, a practical year-end financial checklist, and an article outlining five important financial moves you can make before the end of the year. Small, thoughtful actions today can help build greater confidence for tomorrow.

Join us for Advisory Brew



Looking for a relaxed way to stay informed and connect with others in the community?

Join our Advisory team for our monthly Advisory Brew Coffee Club at What's Brewin' in Tomahawk.

**Thursday, September 24
9:30 a.m. CT**

Enjoy coffee, conversation, and an opportunity to discuss current market trends, financial topics, or simply catch up with our team.

No presentations. No pressure. Just coffee and conversation.

We hope to see you there!

September Market Update

As summer ends, investors face a market shaped by persistent inflation, a cautious Fed, a cooling labor market, and continued equity strength. With growth still positive, the balance between inflation and employment is increasingly important heading into fall.

Inflation:

Inflation moderated slightly in July but remains above the Fed's 2% target. CPI rose 0.1% for the month and 3.4% year over year, down from 3.5% in June. Core CPI rose 2.5% year over year, while core PCE—the Fed's preferred gauge—rose 3.3%. Higher energy costs drove headline inflation, while underlying pressures stayed contained.

Federal Reserve Policy:

The Fed held rates at 3.50%–3.75% in July, though three policymakers favored a hike, signaling growing inflation concern. Minutes showed markets increasingly pricing in another hike by September. The next meeting, September 15–16, makes upcoming data especially important.

Labor Market:

The labor market weakened notably in July. Payrolls fell by 23,000, while unemployment held at 4.1%. May and June gains were revised down by a combined 103,000 jobs. Though unemployment remains historically low, slower hiring suggests growing caution. The August jobs report, due September 4, will be closely watched.

Market Performance & Valuations:

Despite inflation, rate, and geopolitical concerns, U.S. stocks remain solidly higher for the year. Through August 26, the S&P 500 was up about 12.1% YTD, the Nasdaq about 12.4%, and the Dow about 11.2%. Strong earnings and AI enthusiasm have supported equities, though elevated valuations and rate uncertainty could bring more volatility into the historically challenging fall.

Bond Market:

Bonds continue reflecting inflation and Fed-policy concerns. The 10-year Treasury yield moved toward 4.7% in late August, near multi-month highs. Higher yields offer attractive income but raise borrowing costs and can pressure equity valuations. Rate direction this fall will hinge on whether inflation keeps moderating and labor weakness deepens.

Outlook:

September looks pivotal, with jobs and inflation data due just before the Fed's meeting—further hiring weakness could ease rate pressure, though persistent inflation may keep policymakers cautious. Long-term investors should stay diversified and disciplined, as equities benefit from earnings growth while higher bond yields offer rare income opportunities, even amid likely volatility.

Retirement and Investing Q&A

SHOULD I MAKE CHANGES TO MY INVESTMENTS BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR?

Year-end is a natural time to review your portfolio, but it doesn't necessarily mean you need to make changes. Instead of reacting to recent market performance, focus on whether your investments still align with your long-term goals, risk tolerance, and financial plan. A year-end review with your advisor is a great opportunity to evaluate your progress and discuss any adjustments that may be appropriate for your individual situation.

Questions to Ask During Your Annual Review

Preparing questions ahead of your meeting can help you get the most from your annual review.

Consider asking:

- *Am I still on track for retirement?*
- *Has my risk tolerance changed?*
- *Should I adjust my investment allocation?*
- *Are there tax-saving opportunities before year-end?*
- *Do my beneficiaries need updating?*
- *Has anything changed in the market that affects my financial plan?*
- *Are there planning opportunities I should consider for 2027?*

A productive review isn't just about looking back—it's about making informed decisions for the future.

Preparing for Year-End: Five Financial Moves That Can Make a Difference

As the year begins to wind down, now is a great time to review your financial progress. A few simple steps before year-end can help keep you on track and position you for success in the year ahead.

1. Increase Retirement Contributions

If possible, boost your 401(k) or IRA contributions before year-end. Even a small increase can make a meaningful difference over time.

2. Review Your Investment Strategy

Market performance may have changed your portfolio's allocation. Review your investments to ensure they still align with your goals and risk tolerance.

3. Update Beneficiaries

Review the beneficiaries listed on your retirement accounts and insurance policies. Major life events may mean it's time for an update.

4. Review your Budget

With holiday spending approaching, now is a good time to evaluate your budget. Identify opportunities to reduce unnecessary expenses and strengthen your savings.

5. Schedule Your Annual Review

Meeting with your financial advisor before year-end allows you to review your progress, discuss tax planning opportunities, and prepare for the year ahead.

Finish the Year Strong

Financial success isn't about making dramatic changes - it's about making consistent, thoughtful decisions over time. Taking these five simple steps before year-end can help you enter the new year with greater confidence and peace of mind.

If you'd like to review your financial plan or discuss your goals, contact Wealth Strategy Group to schedule your annual review. We're here to help you finish the year strong.



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