



2015

A NOTEWORTHY YEAR



Dear Shareholders:

With assets growing 38% to almost \$5.6 billion, 2015 was a busy year for Ameris Bank. Besides the record year in asset growth, we achieved 29% growth in operating net income and 23% growth in total revenue, and finished the year with a market value of \$1.1 billion. At the end of 2015, we were recognized for having grown shareholder value faster than 92% of all publicly traded financial institutions over the past five years.

We had non-financial successes in 2015, which strengthen Ameris Bancorp for the future. We built stronger support systems in customer service and information technology, and expanded our vision for recruiting and training the best bankers in our markets. Also, our efforts to reinforce The Ameris Approach succeeded, as we continue to receive highly complimentary marks from our customers.

As we head into 2016, I am more confident than ever about what our Company can achieve. We will continue to lead in the M&A arena with disciplined deals that are accretive to our franchise and your share value. We are positioned to experience solid profitability gains from organic growth, as well as significant share of our larger metropolitan markets. Our staffing levels and pipelines in mortgage and SBA forecast continued growth in profitability and a contribution to return on assets that would propel Ameris Bancorp to the top of our peer group. Our credit quality ratios are better than they have been in a decade and should remain strong with a loan portfolio that is increasingly built on higher quality customers. Lastly, our absolute commitment to improving operating efficiency will anchor our goal of providing strong and consistent earnings in 2016 and beyond.

We are very thankful for the contribution of our outstanding employees and board members, and for continued support and enthusiasm from all of our shareholders.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Edwin W. Hortman, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.

President and Chief Executive Officer

2015



**MORE SHAREHOLDER
VALUE THAN 92% OF
BANKS IN THE U.S. IN
THE LAST FIVE YEARS***

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

**ACQUISITION OF MERCHANTS &
SOUTHERN BANKS OF FLORIDA, INC.
AND 18 ADDITIONAL RETAIL LOCATIONS**

DEPOSIT & LOAN GROWTH

**TOTAL DEPOSITS OF OVER \$4.88 BILLION,
ALONGSIDE LOANS REACHING OVER
\$4.02 BILLION THROUGH GROWTH
IN LINES OF BUSINESS**





CREDIT QUALITY

**NOTEWORTHY IMPROVEMENT IN
ASSET QUALITY WITH SIGNIFICANT
REDUCTION IN CREDIT EXPENSES**

AMERIS BANCORP'S LEADERSHIP PRODUCES RETURNS THAT CONTINUE TO OUTPERFORM PEERS.

Our executive leadership and Bancorp board of directors continue to execute bold and creative strategies to create and maximize shareholder value. Throughout 2015, we honed our credit quality, resulting in a noteworthy improvement in loan quality and a significant reduction in credit-related expenses. Our retail and commercial banking teams remain focused on the customer, evident in both our deposit and loan growth. Total deposits reached over \$4.88 billion, accounting for 98% of total funding. Total loans grew to an all-time high of \$4.02 billion, in part due to the deliberate focus on expanding lending lines of business. The intentional growth of our mortgage operations continues to produce significant income quarter over quarter. Our credit quality improvement, together with notable profitability in loan, deposit and non-interest income, continues to deliver on our Mission of creating positive shareholder return.

**Per SNL, references the total return of a company's stock for publicly traded banks over the five year period ending December 31, 2015.*



1304

**1304 EMPLOYEES
PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY
FOR EXPANSION IN LARGE
GROWTH MARKETS**



**STRATEGIC
GROWTH**

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE
PENDING ACQUISITION OF
JACKSONVILLE BANCORP, INC.**

**TALENT
INVESTMENT**

**FOCUSING ON TALENT OPPORTUNITIES
IN TECHNOLOGY, RISK, COMPLIANCE,
AND LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT**



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

COLLECTION OF OVER 845,000 NON-PERISHABLE ITEMS DURING THE 5TH ANNUAL HELPING FIGHT HUNGER CAMPAIGN

EXPANSION IN LARGE MUNICIPAL MARKETS, WHILE RETAINING OUR COMMUNITY BANK HERITAGE.

Our talented and dedicated employees, throughout our branch and enterprise network, provide us the opportunity to continue expansion in large, quality growth markets. We continue to make investments in recruiting and hiring specialized talent, as well as the further development of all colleagues. The investment in our employees is invaluable, as we focus on the whole individual: technical knowledge, professional and leadership growth, and community and philanthropic outreach. This is marked by our meaningful 5th annual Helping Fight Hunger campaign and employee involvement in over 450 local and civic organizations. We continue to focus on talent opportunities in technology, risk, compliance, and learning and development, to provide expertise for ongoing advancement in our offerings, communication, and financial and cybersecurity literacy. The investment in our people enhances the customer experience, accelerates our growth, and propels us towards making our Vision a reality.



10

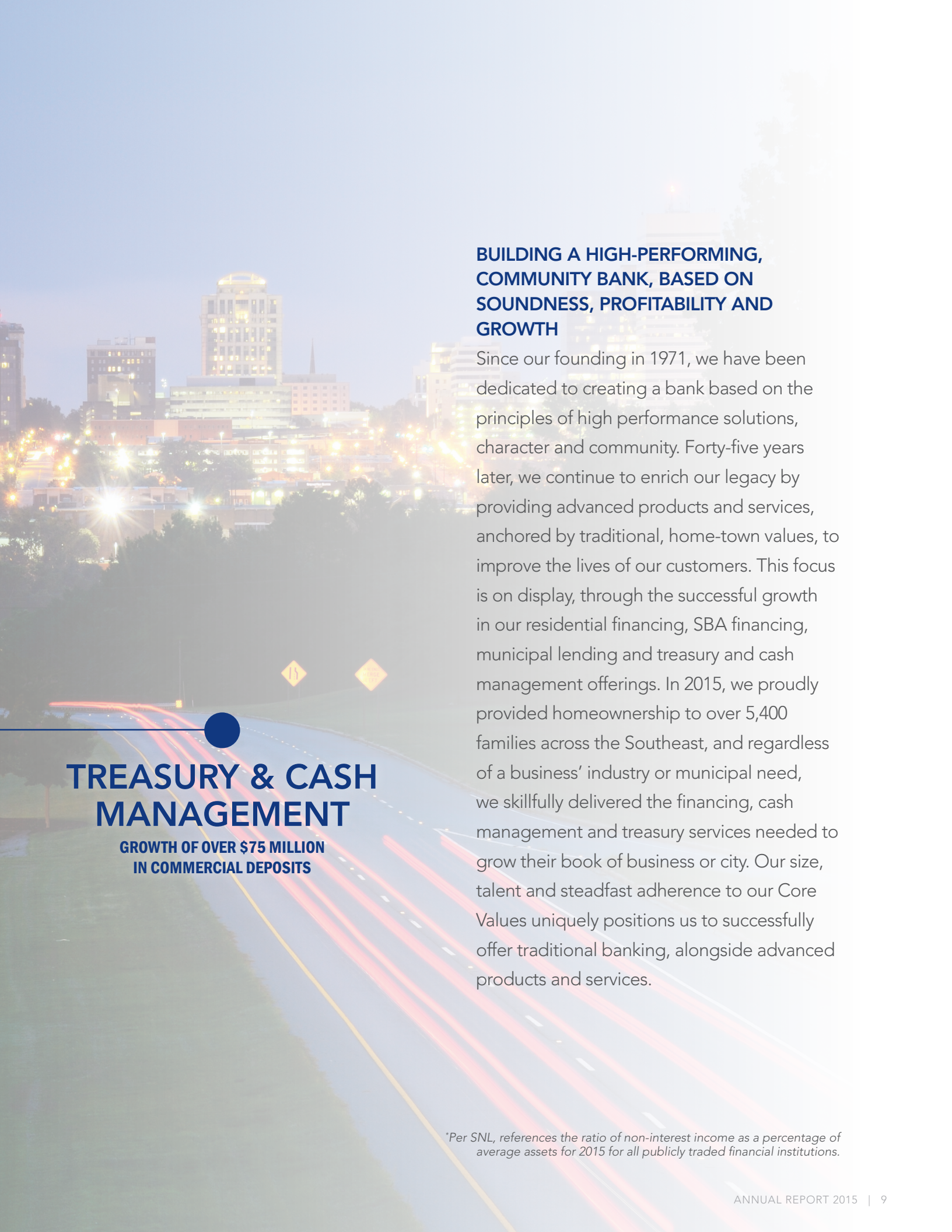
**OUR SUCCESS IN
NON-INTEREST INCOME
RANKED US IN THE TOP
10% OF ALL U.S. BANKS***

**RESIDENTIAL
FINANCING**

**OVER \$1 BILLION IN RESIDENTIAL
FINANCING AND OVER \$1.9 BILLION IN
WAREHOUSE FUNDING**

**SBA &
MUNICIPAL
FINANCING**

**FINANCED OVER \$54 MILLION IN
SMALL BUSINESSES AND OVER
\$100 MILLION IN MUNICIPALITIES**



BUILDING A HIGH-PERFORMING, COMMUNITY BANK, BASED ON SOUNDNESS, PROFITABILITY AND GROWTH

Since our founding in 1971, we have been dedicated to creating a bank based on the principles of high performance solutions, character and community. Forty-five years later, we continue to enrich our legacy by providing advanced products and services, anchored by traditional, home-town values, to improve the lives of our customers. This focus is on display, through the successful growth in our residential financing, SBA financing, municipal lending and treasury and cash management offerings. In 2015, we proudly provided homeownership to over 5,400 families across the Southeast, and regardless of a business' industry or municipal need, we skillfully delivered the financing, cash management and treasury services needed to grow their book of business or city. Our size, talent and steadfast adherence to our Core Values uniquely positions us to successfully offer traditional banking, alongside advanced products and services.



TREASURY & CASH MANAGEMENT

**GROWTH OF OVER \$75 MILLION
IN COMMERCIAL DEPOSITS**

**Per SNL, references the ratio of non-interest income as a percentage of average assets for 2015 for all publicly traded financial institutions.*



143

**EXPANSION OF OUR CUSTOMER
BASE BY OVER 143,000 NEW
ACCOUNTS AND LOANS**

**TRANSITION
SUPPORT**

**DEPLOYMENT OF OVER 229
COLLEAGUES AND BUSINESS
PARTNERS FOR TECHNOLOGY, SYSTEM
AND CUSTOMER SUPPORT**

**TECHNOLOGY
DEPLOYED**

**ADVANCEMENT IN WORKPLACE
TECHNOLOGY, ATM FUNCTIONALITY,
ONLINE AND MOBILE SUPPORT**



SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OF MERGER AND ACQUISITION ACTIVITIES

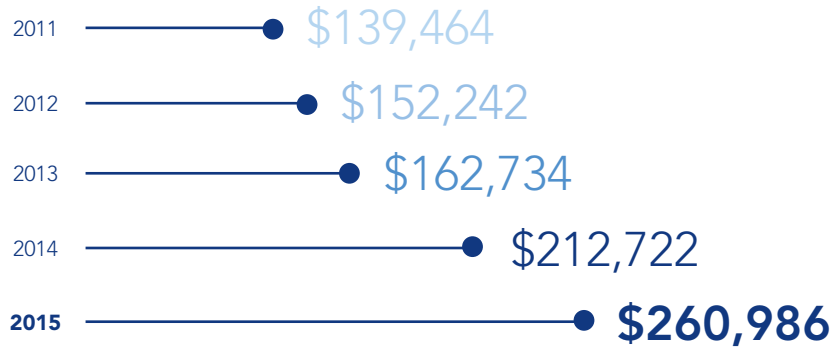
Bringing financial peace of mind to our communities, one person at a time, is our Purpose lived daily. This is profoundly evident in our Company's ability to successfully integrate multiple financial institutions. Our two 2015 acquisitions almost doubled our customer base, including over 60,000 additional online banking customers and over 100,000 additional debit cards issued. Our expert enterprise support teams transitioned accounts, loans and technology, and appropriately notified customers and educated new team members. Throughout the transition, legacy bankers provided additional on-site support, as our bankers continue to retain and develop customer relationships. The Customer Care Center, now supported by enhanced call center technology, knowledgeably serves over 94% more callers monthly on average. With our Purpose at the forefront, our successful transitions and positive customer retention resulted in our Company's asset size reaching almost \$5.6 billion.



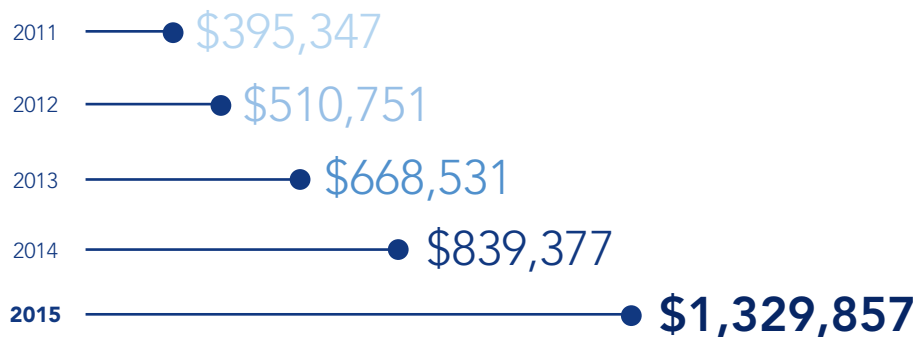
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

EXPANSION OF CUSTOMER CARE CENTER AND EXECUTION OF ROBUST CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION PLAN

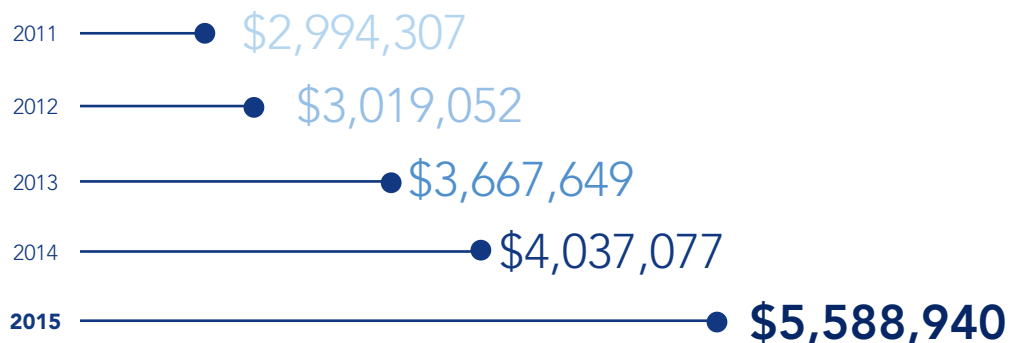
**NET INTEREST INCOME
PLUS NON-INTEREST INCOME
(EXCLUDING GAINS ON ACQUISITIONS)**
(In thousands of dollars)



NON-INTEREST BEARING DEPOSITS
(In thousands of dollars)



ASSETS
(In thousands of dollars)



FINANCIALS FOR 2015

REVENUE (NET INTEREST INCOME PLUS NON-INTEREST INCOME)

During 2015, we were able to significantly grow our recurring revenue stream through core balance sheet growth complimented by strategic acquisitions. Total recurring revenue (excluding gains on acquisitions) increased 23% during 2015. Net interest income increased 17% due to the growth in earning assets from internal sources as well as the acquisition activity. We finished deploying the excess cash received during the acquisitions late in 2015 and expect spread income to benefit in 2016. Lastly, growth rates were again in double digits for our retail mortgage, warehouse lending and SBA divisions.

NON-INTEREST BEARING DEPOSITS

Our Company's growth in non-interest bearing funding was 58.4% in 2015 and has averaged 37% over the past five years. Our sales efforts, particularly on the complex but larger balance treasury accounts have been successful and allowed us to completely reposition our sensitivity to interest rates. Our retail bankers lead with low cost deposits in their sales efforts and the results reflect a well-trained staff that can differentiate Ameris Bank for both retail and commercial deposit prospects. Our reliance on non-deposit funding also benefits from this strategy, finishing 2015 at only 1.3% of total funding.

ASSETS

Total assets grew 38% in 2015, finishing at almost \$5.6 billion. Average asset growth for the last five years has averaged approximately 13.5%, a result of strong organic production and a successful acquisition strategy that has strengthened our market share position in key metro markets in the Southeast. The material market share position our Company holds in both small and large markets has contributed to our ability to recruit the best bankers and ensures better than average growth rates into the future.

AMERIS BANCORP LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



PICTURED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT. TOP ROW: **CHAIRMAN DANIEL B. JETER**, STANDARD DISCOUNT CORPORATION (CONSUMER FINANCE); **EDWIN W. HORTMAN, JR.**, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AMERIS BANCORP; **WILLIAM I. BOWEN, JR.**, BOWEN–DONALDSON HOME FOR FUNERALS (FUNERAL SERVICES); **R. DALE EZZELL**, WISECARDS PRINTING (PRINT SERVICES); BOTTOM ROW: **LEO J. HILL**, TRANSAMERICA MUTUAL FUNDS (INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR); **ROBERT P. LYNCH**, LYNCH MANAGEMENT COMPANY (AUTOMOBILE SALES); **WILLIAM H. STERN**, STERN AND STERN & ASSOCIATES (REAL ESTATE); **JIMMY D. VEAL**, BEACHVIEW EVENT RENTALS & DESIGN (EVENT SERVICES).

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS



PICTURED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT. TOP ROW: **EDWIN W. HORTMAN, JR.**, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER; **ANDREW B. CHENEY**, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER; **DENNIS J. ZEMBER, JR. CPA**, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER; **CINDI H. LEWIS**, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER AND CORPORATE SECRETARY; BOTTOM ROW: **LAWTON E. BASSETT, III**, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF BANKING OFFICER-GEORGIA AND ALABAMA; **JON S. EDWARDS**, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF CREDIT OFFICER; **JAMES A. LAHAISE**, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF BANKING OFFICER-FLORIDA AND SOUTH CAROLINA; **STEPHEN A. MELTON**, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF RISK OFFICER.

COMMUNITY BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

The Ameris Bank Leadership team remains committed to providing the vision and opportunities necessary for our Company to grow consistently and strategically year after year. Supporting our executive team is Ameris Bank's unique structure, one with local market leadership and support from local community boards of directors.

Albany & Cordele, GA

Market President:
Calvin L. McMillan

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
Lawton E. Bassett, III

Directors:

Reid E. Mills, Chairman
Lawton E. Bassett, III
Bonny B. Dorrough
Gregory R. Garland
Calvin L. McMillan
Y. Duncan Moore, Jr.
J. Austin Turner

Cairo, GA

Market President:
Ronnie F. Marchant

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
Lawton E. Bassett, III

Directors:

Jeffrey F. Cox, Chairman
Lawton E. Bassett, III
Kevin S. Cauley
Cuy Harrell, III
Ronnie F. Marchant
G. Ashley Register, M.D.

Donalsonville & Colquitt, GA

Market President:
Harris O. Pittman, III

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
Lawton E. Bassett, III

Directors:

N. Ed King, Jr., Chairman
Lawton E. Bassett, III
D. Glenn Heard
Kenneth R. Massey
Harris O. Pittman, III
Dan E. Ponder, Jr.
Danny S. Shepard

Directors Emeritus:

H. Wayne Carr
John B. Clarke, Sr.
Joseph S. Hall
Jerry G. Mitchell

Dothan, AL

Market President:
Harris O. Pittman, III

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
Lawton E. Bassett, III

Directors:

R. Dale Ezzell, Chairman
Lawton E. Bassett, III
Robert E. Crowder
Ronald E. Dean
John D. DeLoach
C. Phillip Hayes
Harris O. Pittman, III
Alan Wells

Douglas, GA

Market President:
David B. Batchelor

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
Lawton E. Bassett, III

Directors:

Donnie H. Smith, Chairman
Lawton E. Bassett, III
David B. Batchelor
Kevin L. Gilliard
Faye H. Hennesy
Alfred Lott, Jr.

Gainesville & Ocala, FL

Market President:
James Stewart

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
James A. LaHaise

Directors:

Thomas McIntosh, Chairman
R. Dale Barron
Carl W. Ellspermann
Kenneth Kirkpatrick
James A. LaHaise
James D. Salter
James Stewart
Breck A. Weingart

Jacksonville, FL

Market President:
Cecil Gibson

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
James A. LaHaise

Directors:

Joseph P. Helow, Chairman
Robert M. Bradley, Jr.
Phillip H. Cury
Cecil Gibson
Major B. Harding, Jr.
Robert L. Jones, III
James A. LaHaise
Robert P. Lynch
J. Charles Wilson, C.P.A.

Moultrie, GA

Market President:
Ronnie F. Marchant

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
Lawton E. Bassett, III

Directors:

Thomas W. Rowell,
Chairman
Lawton E. Bassett, III
Thomas L. Estes, M.D.
Robert A. Faircloth
R. Plenn Hunnicutt
Daniel B. Jeter
Lynn L. Jones, Jr.
Ronnie F. Marchant
J. Mark Mobley, Jr.

Director Emeritus:

Brooks Sheldon

Ocala, GA

Market President:
David Batchelor

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
Lawton E. Bassett, III

Directors:

Gary H. Paulk, Chairman
Lawton E. Bassett, III
David B. Batchelor
Howard C. McMahan, M.D.
Wesley T. Paulk

Directors Emeritus:

Loran A. Pate
Daniel M. Paulk

Savannah, GA

Market President:
Austen D. Carroll

Regional President:
H. Richard Sturm

Directors:

Matthew A. West,
Chairman
Austen D. Carroll
Nina T. Gompels
J. Mason Heidt, CLTC
Thomas Lawhorne, III, Ph.D.
Christopher J. Peters
John L. Reynolds
H. Richard Sturm

Southeast Georgia Coast

Market President:
Michael D. Hodges

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
James A. LaHaise

Directors:
Jimmy D. Veal, Chairman
Michael L. Davis
Michael D. Hodges
Stephen V. Kinney
James A. LaHaise
John W. McDill
G. Tony Sammons

Directors Emeritus:
C. Ray Acosta
Thomas I. Stafford, Jr.
J. Thomas Whelchel

St. Augustine, FL

Market President:
Christopher J. Kamienski

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
James A. LaHaise

Directors:
Mark F. Bailey, Sr.,
Chairman
Matthew E. Baker
James E. Creamer, Jr.
Christopher J. Kamienski
James A. LaHaise
David E. Lee
Tracy W. Upchurch

Director Emeritus:
Melvin A. McQuaig

State of South Carolina

Regional President:
H. Richard Sturm

Directors:
William H. Stern, Chairman
Kirkman Finlay, III
Edward G. McDonnell
William Weston J. Newton
A. Rae Phillips
H. Richard Sturm

Tallahassee, FL

Market President:
Robert D. Vice

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
James A. LaHaise

Directors:
Halsey Beshears, Chairman
Jeff Hartley
James A. LaHaise
Hector Mejia, M.D.
Ruben R. Rowe, III
Brent Sparkman
Robert D. Vice

Thomasville, GA

Market President:
Ronnie F. Marchant

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
Lawton E. Bassett, III

Directors:
L. Maurice Chastain,
Chairman
Dale E. Aldridge
Lawton E. Bassett, III
S. Mark Brewer, M.D.
Kenneth E. Hickey
Ronnie F. Marchant
Terrel M. Solana, Ph.D.

Tifton, GA

Market President:
Charles T. Barger, III

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
Lawton E. Bassett, III

Directors:
William I. Bowen, Jr.,
Chairman
Charles T. Barger, III
Lawton E. Bassett, III
Austin L. Coarsey
Scott R. Fulp, D.D.S.
John Alan Lindsey
Fortson B. Turner
Clifford A. Walker, Sr.,
D.M.D.

Director Emeritus:
J. Raymond Fulp

Trenton, FL

Market President:
James Stewart

City President:
Michael E. McElroy

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
James A. LaHaise

Directors:
Doug Crawford, Chairman
Adra B. Kennard
James A. LaHaise
Michael E. McElroy
Kelly J. Philman
James Stewart

Valdosta, GA

Market President:
Michael T. Lee

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
Lawton E. Bassett, III

Directors:
Charles E. Smith,
Chairman
Lawton E. Bassett, III
Michael T. Lee
Bart T. Mizell
M. Alan Wheeler
T. Eddie York

Directors Emeritus:
Doyle Weltzbarker
Henry C. Wortman

Vidalia, GA

Market President:
David Batchelor

City President:
Jacob Cleghorn

EVP & Chief Banking Officer:
Lawton E. Bassett, III

Directors:
Christopher A. Hopkins,
Chairman
Lawton E. Bassett, III
David Batchelor
Pollyann F. Martin
Jeffery S. McLain
Jacob Cleghorn

Cautionary Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements

This Annual Report contains statements that constitute "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended. The words "believe", "estimate", "expect", "intend", "anticipate" and similar expressions and variations thereof identify certain of such forward-looking statements, which speak only as of the dates which they were made. Ameris Bancorp undertakes no obligation to publicly update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events, or otherwise. Readers are cautioned that any such forward-looking statements are not guarantees of future performance and involve risks and uncertainties, and that actual results may differ materially from those indicated in the forward-looking statements as a result of various factors. Readers are cautioned not to place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements.



ANNUAL REPORT
FORM 10-K

2015

UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20549

FORM 10-K

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

For the fiscal year ended December 31, 2015, or

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

For the transition period from _____ to _____.

Commission File Number
001-13901


AMERIS BANCORP
(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

GEORGIA
(State of incorporation)

58-1456434
(IRS Employer ID No.)

310 FIRST ST., SE, MOULTRIE, GA 31768
(Address of principal executive offices)

(229) 890-1111
(Registrant's telephone number)

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act: Common Stock, Par Value \$1 Per Share

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act: None

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

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

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

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

Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K is not contained herein, and will not be contained, to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K.

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

Large accelerated filer Accelerated filer

Non-accelerated filer Smaller reporting company

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

As of the last business day of the registrant's most recently completed second fiscal quarter, the aggregate market value of the voting and non-voting common equity held by nonaffiliates of the registrant was approximately \$788.7 million.

As of February 18, 2016, the registrant had outstanding 32,211,385 shares of common stock, \$1.00 par value per share.

DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

Portions of the registrant's Proxy Statement for the 2016 Annual Meeting of Shareholders are incorporated into Part III hereof by reference.

AMERIS BANCORP
TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
PART I	
Item 1. Business	1
Item 1A. Risk Factors	17
Item 1B. Unresolved Staff Comments	24
Item 2. Properties	24
Item 3. Legal Proceedings	24
Item 4. Mine Safety Disclosures	24
PART II	
Item 5. Market for Registrant’s Common Equity, Related Stockholder Matters and Issuer Purchases of Equity Securities	25
Item 6. Selected Financial Data	27
Item 7. Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations	29
Item 7A. Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures About Market Risk	56
Item 8. Financial Statements and Supplementary Data	57
Item 9. Changes in and Disagreements With Accountants on Accounting and Financial Disclosure	57
Item 9A. Controls and Procedures	57
Item 9B. Other Information	57
PART III	
Item 10. Directors, Executive Officers and Corporate Governance	57
Item 11. Executive Compensation	57
Item 12. Security Ownership of Certain Beneficial Owners and Management and Related Stockholder Matters	58
Item 13. Certain Relationships and Related Transactions, and Director Independence	58
Item 14. Principal Accounting Fees and Services	58
PART IV	
Item 15. Exhibits, Financial Statement Schedules	58

CAUTIONARY NOTICE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

Certain statements contained in this Annual Report on Form 10-K (this “Annual Report”) under the caption “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations,” and elsewhere, including information incorporated herein by reference to other documents, are “forward-looking statements” within the meaning of, and subject to the protections of, Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the “Securities Act”), and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the “Exchange Act”).

Forward-looking statements include statements with respect to our beliefs, plans, objectives, goals, expectations, anticipations, assumptions, estimates, intentions and future performance and involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors, many of which may be beyond our control and which may cause the actual results, performance or achievements of Ameris Bancorp to be materially different from future results, performance or achievements expressed or implied by such forward-looking statements.

All statements other than statements of historical fact are statements that could be forward-looking statements. You can identify these forward-looking statements through our use of words such as “may,” “will,” “anticipate,” “assume,” “should,” “indicate,” “would,” “believe,” “contemplate,” “expect,” “estimate,” “continue,” “plan,” “point to,” “project,” “predict,” “could,” “intend,” “target,” “potential” and other similar words and expressions of the future. These forward-looking statements may not be realized due to a variety of factors, including, without limitation, those described in Part I, Item 1A., “Risk Factors,” and elsewhere in this report and those described from time to time in our future reports filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “SEC”) under the Exchange Act.

All written or oral forward-looking statements that are made by or are attributable to us are expressly qualified in their entirety by this cautionary notice. Our forward-looking statements apply only as of the date of this Annual Report or the respective date of the document from which they are incorporated herein by reference. We have no obligation and do not undertake to update, revise or correct any of the forward-looking statements after the date of this Annual Report, or after the respective dates on which such statements otherwise are made, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.

PART I

As used in this Annual Report, the terms “we,” “us,” “our,” “Ameris” and the “Company” refer to Ameris Bancorp and its subsidiaries (unless the context indicates another meaning).

ITEM 1. BUSINESS

OVERVIEW

We are a financial holding company whose business is conducted primarily through our wholly owned banking subsidiary, Ameris Bank (the “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 was incorporated on December 18, 1980 as a Georgia corporation. 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. We operate 101 domestic banking offices, with eight of those locations announced to be consolidated within the coming months. We do not operate in any foreign activities. At December 31, 2015, we had approximately \$5.59 billion in total assets, \$4.02 billion in total loans, \$4.88 billion in total deposits and stockholders’ equity of \$514.8 million. Our deposits are insured, up to applicable limits, by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (the “FDIC”).

We make our annual reports on Form 10-K, quarterly reports on Form 10-Q, current reports on Form 8-K and amendments to those reports filed or furnished pursuant to Section 13(a) or 15(d) of the Exchange Act available free of charge on our website at www.amerisbank.com as soon as reasonably practicable after we electronically file such material with the SEC. These reports are also available without charge on the SEC’s website at www.sec.gov.

The Parent Company

Our primary business as a bank holding company is to manage the business and affairs of the Bank. As a bank holding company, we perform certain shareholder and investor relations functions and seek to provide financial support, if necessary, to the Bank.

Ameris Bank

Our principal subsidiary is the Bank, which is headquartered in Moultrie, Georgia and operates branches primarily concentrated in select markets in Georgia, Alabama, Florida and South Carolina. These branches serve distinct communities in our business areas with autonomy but do so as one bank, leveraging our favorable geographic footprint in an effort to acquire more customers.

Capital Trust Securities

On September 20, 2006, the Company completed a private placement of an aggregate of \$36 million of trust preferred securities. The placement occurred through a statutory trust subsidiary of Ameris, Ameris Statutory Trust I (the "Trust"). The trust preferred securities carry a quarterly adjustable interest rate of 1.63% over the 3-Month LIBOR. The trust preferred securities mature on December 15, 2036, and became redeemable at the Company's option on September 15, 2011.

On December 16, 2005, Ameris acquired First National Banc, Inc. ("FNB") by merger. In connection with such transaction, Ameris assumed the obligations of FNB related to its prior issuance of trust preferred securities. In 2004, FNB's statutory trust subsidiary, First National Banc Statutory Trust I, issued \$5,000,000 in principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 2.80% through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. These trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date.

On December 23, 2013, Ameris acquired The Prosperity Banking Company ("Prosperity") by merger. In connection with such transaction, Ameris assumed the obligations of Prosperity related to the following issuances of trust preferred securities: (i) in 2003, Prosperity's statutory trust subsidiary, Prosperity Bank Statutory Trust II, issued \$4,500,000 in principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 3.15%; (ii) in 2004, Prosperity's statutory trust subsidiary, Prosperity Banking Capital Trust 1, issued \$5,000,000 in principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 90-Day LIBOR plus 2.57%; (iii) in 2006, Prosperity's statutory trust subsidiary, Prosperity Bank Statutory Trust III, issued \$10,000,000 in principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 90-Day LIBOR plus 1.60%; and (iv) in 2007, Prosperity's statutory trust subsidiary, Prosperity Bank Statutory Trust IV, issued \$10,000,000 in principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 90-Day LIBOR plus 1.54%. Each of the foregoing issuances was consummated through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. These trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date.

On June 30, 2014, Ameris acquired Coastal Bankshares, Inc. ("Coastal") by merger. In connection with such transaction, Ameris assumed the obligations of Coastal related to the following issuances of trust preferred securities: (i) in 2003, Coastal's statutory trust subsidiary, Coastal Bankshares Statutory Trust I, issued \$5,000,000 in principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 3.15%; and (ii) in 2005, Coastal's statutory trust subsidiary, Coastal Bankshares Statutory Trust II, issued \$10,000,000 in principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 1.60%. Each of the foregoing issuances was consummated through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. These trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date.

On May 22, 2015, Ameris acquired Merchants & Southern Banks of Florida, Incorporated ("Merchants") by merger. In connection with such transaction, Ameris assumed the obligations of Merchants related to the following issuances of trust preferred securities: (i) in 2005, Merchants' statutory trust subsidiary, Merchants & Southern Statutory Trust I, issued \$3,000,000 in principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 1.90%; and (ii) in 2006, Merchants' statutory trust subsidiary, Merchants & Southern Statutory Trust II, issued \$3,000,000 in principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 1.50%. Each of the foregoing issuances was consummated through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. These trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date.

See the Notes to our Consolidated Financial Statements included in this Annual Report for a further discussion of these trust preferred securities.

Strategy

We seek to increase our presence and grow the "Ameris" brand in the markets that we currently serve in Georgia, Alabama, Florida and South Carolina and in neighboring communities that present attractive opportunities for expansion. Management has pursued this objective through an acquisition-oriented growth strategy and a prudent operating strategy. Our community banking philosophy emphasizes personalized service and building broad and deep customer relationships, which has provided us with a substantial base of low cost core deposits. Our markets are managed by senior level, experienced decision makers in a decentralized structure that differentiates us from our larger competitors. Management believes that this structure, along with involvement in and knowledge of our local markets, will continue to provide growth and assist in managing risk throughout our Company.

We have maintained our focus on a long-term strategy of expanding and diversifying our franchise in terms of revenues, profitability and asset size. Our growth over the past several years has been enhanced significantly by bank acquisitions, including the purchase of 18 retail branches from Bank of America in 2015 and the acquisition of Merchants in 2015, Coastal in 2014, Prosperity in 2013 and ten failed institutions in FDIC-assisted transactions between 2009 and 2012. We expect to continue to take advantage of the consolidation in the financial services industry and enhance our franchise through future acquisitions. We intend to grow within our existing markets, to branch into or acquire financial institutions in existing markets as well as financial institutions in other markets consistent with our capital availability and management abilities.

BANKING SERVICES

Lending Activities

General. The Company maintains a diversified loan portfolio by providing a broad range of commercial and retail lending services to business entities and individuals. We provide agricultural loans, commercial business loans, commercial and residential real estate construction and mortgage loans, consumer loans, revolving lines of credit and letters of credit. The Company also originates first mortgage residential mortgage loans and generally enters into a commitment to sell these loans in the secondary market. We have not made or participated in foreign, energy-related or subprime type loans. In addition, the Company does not buy loan participations or portions of national credits but from time to time, may acquire balances subject to participation agreements through acquisition. Excluding covered loans, less than 1% of the Company's loan portfolio was a loan participation purchased at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

At December 31, 2015, our loan portfolio totaled approximately \$4.02 billion, representing approximately 71.9% of our total assets. For additional discussion of our loan portfolio, see "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations – Loans."

Commercial Real Estate Loans. This portion of our loan portfolio has grown significantly over the past few years and represents the largest segment of our loan portfolio. These loans are generally extended for acquisition, development or construction of commercial properties. The loans are underwritten with an emphasis on the viability of the project, the borrower's ability to meet certain minimum debt service requirements and an analysis and review of the collateral and guarantors, if any.

Residential Real Estate Mortgage Loans. Ameris originates adjustable and fixed-rate residential mortgage loans. These mortgage loans are generally originated under terms and conditions consistent with secondary market guidelines. Some of these loans will be placed in the Company's loan portfolio; however, a majority are sold in the secondary market. The residential real estate mortgage loans that are included in the Company's loan portfolio are usually owner-occupied and generally amortized over a 10- to 20-year period with three- to five-year maturity or repricing.

Agricultural Loans. Our agricultural loans are extended to finance crop production, the purchase of farm-related equipment or farmland and the operations of dairies, poultry producers, livestock producers and timber growers. Agricultural loans typically involve seasonal balance fluctuations. Although we typically look to an agricultural borrower's cash flow as the principal source of repayment, agricultural loans are also generally secured by a security interest in the crops or the farm-related equipment and, in some cases, an assignment of crop insurance and mortgage on real estate. The lending officer visits the borrower regularly during the growing season and re-evaluates the loan in light of the borrower's updated cash flow projections. A portion of our agricultural loans is guaranteed by the Farm Service Agency Guaranteed Loan Program.

Commercial and Industrial Loans. Generally, commercial and industrial loans consist of loans made primarily to manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers of goods, service companies, municipalities and other industries. These loans are made for acquisition, expansion and working capital purposes and may be secured by real estate, accounts receivable, inventory, equipment, personal guarantees or other assets. The Company monitors these loans by requesting submission of corporate and personal financial statements and income tax returns. The Company has also generated loans which are guaranteed by the U.S. Small Business Administration (the "SBA"). SBA loans are generally underwritten in the same manner as conventional loans generated for the Bank's portfolio. Periodically, a portion of the loans that are secured by the guaranty of the SBA will be sold in the secondary market. Management believes that making such loans helps the local community and also provides Ameris with a source of income and solid future lending relationships as such businesses grow and prosper. The primary repayment risk for commercial loans is the failure of the business due to economic or financial factors.

Consumer Loans. Our consumer loans include motor vehicle, home improvement, home equity, student and signature loans and small personal credit lines. The terms of these loans typically range from 12 to 60 months and vary based upon the nature of collateral and size of the loan. These loans are generally secured by various assets owned by the consumer.

Credit Administration

We have sought to maintain a comprehensive lending policy that meets the credit needs of each of the communities served by the Bank, including low and moderate-income customers, and to employ lending procedures and policies consistent with this approach. All loans are subject to our corporate loan policy, which is reviewed annually and updated as needed. The loan policy provides that lending officers have sole authority to approve loans of various amounts commensurate with their seniority, experience and needs within the market. Our local market Presidents have discretion to approve loans in varying principal amounts up to established limits, and our regional credit officers review and approve loans that exceed such limits.

Individual lending authority is assigned by the Company's Chief Credit Officer, as is the maximum limit of new extensions of credit that may be approved in each market. These approval limits are reviewed annually by the Company and adjusted as needed. All requests for extensions of credit in excess of any of these limits are reviewed by one of four regional credit officers. When the request for approval exceeds the authority level of the regional credit officer, the approval of the Company's Chief Credit Officer and/or the Company's loan committee are required. All new loans or modifications to existing loans in excess of \$250,000 are reviewed monthly by the Company's credit administration department with the lender responsible for the credit. In addition, our ongoing loan review program subjects the portfolio to sampling and objective review by our monthly internal loan review process which is independent of the originating loan officer.

Each lending officer has authority to make loans only in the market area in which his or her Bank office is located and its contiguous counties. Occasionally, our loan committee will approve making a loan outside of the market areas of the Bank, provided the Bank has a prior relationship with the borrower. Our lending policy requires analysis of the borrower's projected cash flow and ability to service the debt.

We actively market our services to qualified lending customers in both the commercial and consumer sectors. Our commercial lending officers actively solicit the business of new companies entering the market as well as longstanding members of that market's business community. Through personalized professional service and competitive pricing, we have been successful in attracting new commercial lending customers. At the same time, we actively advertise our consumer loan products and continually seek to make our lending officers more accessible.

The Bank continually monitors its loan portfolio to identify areas of concern and to enable management to take corrective action when necessary. Local market Presidents and lending officers meet periodically to review all past due loans, the status of large loans and certain other credit or economic related matters. Individual lending officers are responsible for collection of past due amounts and monitoring any changes in the financial status of the borrowers.

Investment Activities

Our investment policy is designed to maximize income from funds not needed to meet loan demand in a manner consistent with appropriate liquidity and risk management objectives. Under this policy, our Company may invest in federal, state and municipal obligations, corporate obligations, public housing authority bonds, industrial development revenue bonds, securities issued by Government-Sponsored Enterprises ("GSEs") and satisfactorily-rated trust preferred obligations. Investments in our portfolio must satisfy certain quality criteria. Our Company's investments must be "investment-grade" as determined by either Moody's or Standard and Poor's. Investment securities where the Company has determined a certain level of credit risk are periodically reviewed to determine the financial condition of the issuer and to support the Company's decision to continue holding the security. Our Company may purchase non-rated municipal bonds only if the issuer of such bonds is located in the Company's general market area and such bonds are determined by the Company to have a credit risk no greater than the minimum ratings referred to above. Industrial development authority bonds, which normally are not rated, are purchased only if the issuer is located in the Company's market area and if the bonds are considered to possess a high degree of credit soundness. Traditionally, the Company has purchased and held investment securities with very high levels of credit quality, favoring investments backed by direct or indirect guarantees of the U.S. Government.

While our investment policy permits our Company to trade securities to improve the quality of yields or marketability or to realign the composition of the portfolio, the Bank historically has not done so to any significant extent.

Our investment committee implements the investment policy and portfolio strategies and monitors the portfolio. Reports on all purchases, sales, net profits or losses and market appreciation or depreciation of the bond portfolio are reviewed by our Board of Directors each month. The written investment policy is reviewed annually by the Company's Board of Directors and updated as needed.

The Company's securities are held in safekeeping accounts at approved correspondent banks.

Deposits

The Company provides a full range of deposit accounts and services to both retail and commercial customers. These deposit accounts have a variety of interest rates and terms and consist of interest-bearing and noninterest-bearing accounts, including commercial and retail checking accounts, regular interest-bearing savings accounts, money market accounts, individual retirement accounts and certificates of deposit. Our Bank obtains most of its deposits from individuals and businesses in its market areas.

Brokered time deposits are deposits obtained by utilizing an outside broker that is paid a fee. The Bank utilizes brokered deposits to accomplish several purposes, such as (i) acquiring a certain maturity and dollar amount without repricing the Bank's current customers which could increase or decrease the overall cost of deposits and (ii) acquiring certain maturities and dollar amounts to help manage interest rate risk.

Other Funding Sources

The Federal Home Loan Bank ("FHLB") allows the Company to obtain advances through its credit program. These advances are secured by securities owned by the Company and held in safekeeping by the FHLB, FHLB stock owned by the Company and certain qualifying residential mortgages. The Company has a revolving credit agreement with a regional bank, secured by subsidiary bank stock, and the Company maintains credit arrangements with various other financial institutions to purchase federal funds. The Company participates in the Federal Reserve discount window borrowings.

The Company also enters into repurchase agreements. These repurchase agreements are treated as short-term borrowings and are reflected on the Company's balance sheet as such.

Use of Derivatives

The Company seeks to provide a stable net interest income despite changes in interest rates. In its review of interest rate risk, the Company considers the use of derivatives to protect interest income on loans or to create a structure in institutional borrowings that limits the Company's cost. During 2014 and 2015, the Company had an interest rate swap with a notional amount of \$37.1 million for the purpose of converting from a variable to a fixed interest rate on the junior subordinated debentures on the Company's balance sheet. The interest rate swap, which is classified as a cash flow hedge, is indexed to LIBOR.

Additionally, the Company maintains a risk management program to manage interest rate risk and pricing risk associated with its mortgage lending activities. This program includes the use of forward contracts and other derivatives that are used to offset changes in the value of the mortgage inventory due to changes in market interest rates. As a normal part of its operations, the Company enters into derivative contracts such as forward sale commitments and interest rate lock commitments ("IRLCs") to economically hedge risks associated with overall price risk related to IRLCs and mortgage loans held for sale carried at fair value. The fair value of these instruments amounted to an asset of approximately \$2,687,000 and \$1,757,000 at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively, and a derivative liability of approximately \$137,000 and \$249,000 at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively.

CORPORATE RESTRUCTURING AND BUSINESS COMBINATIONS

Jacksonville Bancorp, Inc.

On September 30, 2015, Ameris entered into an Agreement and Plan of Merger (the "Merger Agreement") to acquire Jacksonville Bancorp, Inc. ("JAXB"), the holding company of The Jacksonville Bank. JAXB is headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida and operates eight full-service branches in Jacksonville and Jacksonville Beach, Duval County, Florida, as well as one virtual branch. Under the terms and subject to the conditions of the Merger Agreement, JAXB's shareholders will have the right to receive 0.5861 shares of Ameris common stock or \$16.50 in cash for each share of the common stock and nonvoting common stock of JAXB they hold. The total consideration in the merger will be prorated as necessary to ensure that 25% of the total outstanding shares of common stock and nonvoting common stock of JAXB will be exchanged for cash and 75% of the total outstanding shares of common stock and nonvoting common stock of JAXB will be exchanged for shares of Ameris common stock. The transaction is expected to close in March 2016 and is subject to customary closing conditions. All required regulatory approvals for the transaction have been received. As of September 30, 2015, JAXB reported assets of \$505.3 million, gross loans of \$399.5 million and deposits of \$433.0 million.

Merchants & Southern Banks of Florida, Inc.

On May 22, 2015, Ameris acquired Merchants by merger, at which time Merchants' wholly owned banking subsidiary, Merchants and Southern Bank, also was merged with and into the Bank. Merchants was headquartered in Gainesville, Florida and operated thirteen banking locations in Alachua, Marion and Clay Counties in Florida. The acquisition of Merchants was significant to the Company's growth strategy, as it expanded our existing footprint in several attractive Florida markets. Ameris paid an aggregate purchase price of \$50.0 million to acquire the stock of Merchants.

Acquisition of 18 Branches in North Florida and South Georgia

On June 12, 2015, Ameris completed the acquisition of 18 branches from Bank of America, National Association located in Calhoun, Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Suwanee and Walton Counties, Florida and Ben Hill, Colquitt, Dougherty, Laurens, Liberty, Thomas, Tift and Ware Counties, Georgia. Ameris acquired approximately \$645 million in deposits and paid a deposit premium of \$20.0 million, equal to 3.00% of the average daily deposits for the 15 calendar-day period immediately prior to the acquisition date. In addition, Ameris acquired approximately \$4.0 million in loans and \$10.7 million in premises and equipment.

Coastal Bankshares, Inc.

On June 30, 2014, Ameris acquired Coastal by merger, at which time Coastal's wholly owned banking subsidiary, The Coastal Bank ("Coastal Bank"), also was merged with and into the Bank. Coastal was headquartered in Savannah, Georgia and it operated six banking locations in Chatham, Liberty and Effingham Counties in Georgia. The acquisition of Coastal grew the Company's existing market presence in the Savannah, Georgia market. The consideration for the acquisition was our common stock, par value \$1.00 per share (the "Common Stock"), with an aggregate purchase price of approximately \$37.3 million. The total consideration consisted of approximately 1,599,000 shares of Common Stock with a value of approximately \$34.5 million and \$2.8 million cash in exchange for outstanding warrants.

The Prosperity Banking Company

On December 23, 2013, Ameris acquired Prosperity by merger, at which time Prosperity's wholly owned banking subsidiary, Prosperity Bank ("Prosperity Bank"), also was merged with and into the Bank. Prosperity was headquartered in Saint Augustine, Florida and it operated 12 banking locations in St. Johns, Duval, Flagler, Bay, Putnam and Volusia Counties in northeast Florida and the Florida panhandle. The acquisition of Prosperity was significant to the Company, as it expanded our existing Southeastern footprint in several attractive Florida markets. The consideration for the acquisition was a combination of cash and our Common Stock, with an aggregate purchase price of approximately \$24.6 million. The total consideration consisted of \$162,000 in cash and approximately 1,169,000 shares of Common Stock with a value of approximately \$24.5 million.

Montgomery Bank & Trust

On July 6, 2012, the Bank purchased certain assets and assumed substantially all of the liabilities of Montgomery Bank & Trust ("MBT") from the FDIC, as Receiver of MBT. MBT operated two branches in Ailey and Vidalia, Georgia. The Bank assumed approximately \$156.7 million in customer deposits and acquired approximately \$18.1 million in assets, including approximately \$16.7 million in cash and cash equivalents and approximately \$1.2 million in deposit-secured loans. The assets were acquired without a discount and the deposits were assumed with no premium. To settle the transaction, the FDIC made a cash payment to the Bank totaling approximately \$138.7 million, based on the differential between liabilities assumed and assets acquired.

Central Bank of Georgia

On February 24, 2012, the Bank purchased substantially all of the assets and assumed substantially all of the liabilities of Central Bank of Georgia ("CBG") from the FDIC, as Receiver of CBG. CBG operated five branches in Ellaville, Buena Vista, Butler, Cusseta and Macon, Georgia, with approximately \$182.6 million in loans and approximately \$261.0 million in deposits. The Company's agreements with the FDIC included a loss-sharing agreement which affords the Bank significant protection from losses associated with loans and other real estate owned ("OREO"). Under the terms of the loss-sharing agreement, the FDIC will absorb 80% of losses and share 80% of loss recoveries during the term of the agreement. The term for loss sharing on residential real estate loans is ten years, while the term for loss sharing on all other loans is five years.

The Company's bid to acquire CBG included a discount on the book value of the assets totaling \$33.9 million. The bid resulted in a cash payment from the FDIC totaling \$31.9 million.

High Trust Bank

On July 15, 2011, the Bank purchased substantially all of the assets and assumed substantially all of the liabilities of High Trust Bank ("HTB") from the FDIC, as Receiver of HTB. HTB operated two branches in Stockbridge and Leary, Georgia, with approximately \$133.5 million in loans and approximately \$175.9 million in deposits. The Company's agreements with the FDIC included a loss-sharing agreement which affords the Bank significant protection from losses associated with loans and OREO. Under the terms of the loss-sharing agreement, the FDIC will absorb 80% of losses and share 80% of loss recoveries during the term of the agreement. The term for loss sharing on residential real estate loans is ten years, while the term for loss sharing on all other loans is five years.

The Company's bid to acquire HTB included a discount on the book value of the assets totaling \$33.5 million. The bid resulted in a cash payment from the FDIC totaling \$30.2 million.

One Georgia Bank

On July 15, 2011, the Bank purchased substantially all of the assets and assumed substantially all of the liabilities of One Georgia Bank (“OGB”) from the FDIC, as Receiver of OGB. OGB operated one branch in Midtown Atlanta, Georgia, with approximately \$120.8 million in loans and approximately \$136.1 million in deposits. The Company’s agreements with the FDIC included a loss-sharing agreement which affords the Bank significant protection from losses associated with loans and OREO. Under the terms of the loss-sharing agreement, the FDIC will absorb 80% of losses and share 80% of loss recoveries during the term of the agreement. The term for loss sharing on residential real estate loans is ten years, while the term for loss sharing on all other loans is five years.

The Company’s bid to acquire OGB included a discount on the book value of the assets totaling \$22.5 million. The bid resulted in a cash payment to the FDIC totaling \$5.7 million.

Tifton Banking Company

On November 12, 2010, the Bank purchased substantially all of the assets and assumed substantially all of the liabilities of Tifton Banking Company (“TBC”) from the FDIC, as Receiver of TBC. TBC operated one branch in Tifton, Georgia, with approximately \$118.4 million in loans and approximately \$132.9 million in deposits. The Company’s agreements with the FDIC included a loss-sharing agreement which affords the Bank significant protection from losses associated with loans and OREO. Under the terms of the loss-sharing agreement, the FDIC will absorb 80% of losses and share 80% of loss recoveries during the term of the agreement. The term for loss sharing on residential real estate loans is ten years, while the term for loss sharing on all other loans was five years.

The Company’s acquisition of TBC resulted in the Bank recording \$956,000 of goodwill related to the purchase. The bid resulted in a cash payment to the FDIC totaling \$10.3 million to settle the transaction.

Darby Bank & Trust Co.

On November 12, 2010, the Bank purchased substantially all of the assets and assumed substantially all of the liabilities of Darby Bank & Trust Co. (“DBT”) from the FDIC, as Receiver of DBT. DBT operated seven branches in Vidalia, Lyons, Savannah and Pooler, Georgia, with approximately \$393.3 million in loans and approximately \$387.0 million in deposits. The Company’s agreements with the FDIC included a loss-sharing agreement which affords the Bank significant protection from losses associated with loans and OREO. The loss-sharing agreements for residential real estate loans and for all other loans are separately structured with reimbursement percentages dependent on the losses incurred under the specific agreement. Under the residential real estate agreement, losses up to \$8.4 million are reimbursed at 80%, losses between \$8.4 million and \$11.8 million are reimbursed at 30%, and losses in excess of \$11.8 million are reimbursed at 80%. Under the all other agreement, losses up to \$123.4 million are reimbursed at 80%, losses between \$123.4 million and \$181.3 million are reimbursed at 30%, and losses in excess of \$181.3 million are reimbursed at 80%. The term for loss sharing on residential real estate loans is ten years, while the term for loss sharing on all other loans was five years.

The Company’s bid to acquire DBT included a discount on the book value of the assets totaling \$45.0 million. The bid resulted in a cash payment to the FDIC totaling \$149.9 million.

First Bank of Jacksonville

On October 22, 2010, the Bank purchased substantially all of the assets and assumed substantially all of the liabilities of First Bank of Jacksonville (“FBJ”) from the FDIC, as Receiver of FBJ. FBJ operated two branches in Jacksonville, Florida, with approximately \$51.1 million in loans and approximately \$71.9 million in deposits. The Company’s agreements with the FDIC included a loss-sharing agreement which affords the Bank significant protection from losses associated with loans and OREO. Under the terms of the loss-sharing agreement, the FDIC will absorb 80% of losses and share 80% of loss recoveries during the term of the agreement. The term for loss sharing on residential real estate loans is ten years, while the term for loss sharing on all other loans was five years.

The Company’s bid to acquire FBJ included a discount on the book value of the assets totaling \$4.8 million. The bid resulted in a cash payment from the FDIC totaling \$8.1 million.

Satilla Community Bank

On May 14, 2010, the Bank purchased substantially all of the assets and assumed substantially all of the liabilities of Satilla Community Bank (“SCB”) from the FDIC, as Receiver of SCB. SCB operated one branch in St. Marys, Georgia, the southernmost city on the Georgia coast and a northern suburb of Jacksonville, Florida, with approximately \$68.8 million in loans and approximately \$75.5 million in deposits. The Company’s agreements with the FDIC included a loss-sharing agreement which affords the Bank significant protection from losses associated with loans and OREO. Under the terms of the loss-sharing agreement, the FDIC will absorb 80% of losses and share 80% of loss recoveries during the term of the agreement. The term for loss sharing on residential real estate loans is ten years, while the term for loss sharing on all other loans was five years.

The Company's bid to acquire SCB included a discount on the book value of the assets totaling \$14.4 million. Also included in the bid was a premium of approximately \$92,000 on SCB's deposits. Because SCB's brokered deposits did not pass to the Bank, the acquisition resulted in significantly more assets being purchased than liabilities assumed. As a result, the Bank made a cash payment to the FDIC totaling \$35.7 million to settle the transaction.

United Security Bank

On November 6, 2009, the Bank purchased substantially all of the assets and assumed substantially all of the liabilities of United Security Bank ("USB") from the FDIC, as Receiver of USB. USB operated one branch in Woodstock, Georgia and one branch in Sparta, Georgia, with total loans of approximately \$108.4 million and approximately \$141.1 million of total deposits. The Company's agreements with the FDIC included a loss-sharing agreement which affords the Bank significant protection from losses associated with loans and OREO. Under the terms of the loss-sharing agreement the FDIC will absorb 80% of losses and share 80% of loss recoveries on the first \$46 million of losses and absorb 95% of losses and share in 95% of loss recoveries on losses exceeding \$46 million. The term for loss sharing on residential real estate loans is ten years, while the term for loss sharing on all other loans was five years.

The Company's bid to acquire USB included a discount on the book value of the assets totaling \$32.6 million. Also included in the bid was a premium of approximately \$228,000 on USB's deposits. The bid resulted in a cash payment from the FDIC totaling \$24.2 million.

American United Bank

On October 23, 2009, the Bank purchased substantially all of the assets and assumed substantially all of the liabilities of American United Bank ("AUB") from the FDIC, as Receiver of AUB. AUB operated one branch in Lawrenceville, Georgia, a northeast suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, with approximately \$85.7 million in loans and approximately \$100.5 million in deposits. The Company's agreements with the FDIC included a loss-sharing agreement which affords the Bank significant protection from losses associated with loans and OREO. Under the terms of the loss-sharing agreement, the FDIC will absorb 80% of losses and share 80% of loss recoveries on the first \$38 million of losses and absorb 95% of losses and share in 95% of loss recoveries on losses exceeding \$38 million. The loss-sharing agreement for residential real estate loans was terminated in 2012 with two remaining loans, while the term for loss sharing on all other loans was five years.

The Company's bid to acquire AUB included a discount on the book value of the assets totaling \$19.6 million. Also included in the bid was a premium of approximately \$262,000 on AUB's deposits. The bid resulted in a cash payment from the FDIC totaling \$17.1 million.

Capital Purchase Program

On November 21, 2008, the Company, pursuant to the Capital Purchase Program (the "CPP") established under the Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 ("EESA"), in connection with the Troubled Asset Relief Program ("TARP"), issued and sold to the United States Department of the Treasury (the "Treasury"), for an aggregate cash purchase price of \$52 million, (i) 52,000 shares (the "Preferred Shares") of the Company's Fixed Rate Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series A, having a liquidation preference of \$1,000 per share, and (ii) a ten-year warrant (the "Warrant") to purchase up to 679,443 shares of Common Stock, at an exercise price of \$11.48 per share. Proceeds from the issuance of the Preferred Shares and the Warrant were allocated based on the relative market values of each. As a result of the Company's participation in the CPP, the Company was subject to the rules and regulations promulgated under the EESA. These rules and regulations included certain limitations on compensation for senior executives, dividend payments and payments to senior executives upon termination of employment, as well as certain obligations of the Company to increase its efforts to reduce the number of foreclosures of primary residences.

On June 14, 2012, the Preferred Shares were sold by the Treasury through a registered public offering as part of the Treasury's efforts to wind down its remaining TARP bank investments. While the sale of the Preferred Shares to new investors did not result in any accounting entries and did not change the Company's capital position, it eliminated the executive compensation and corporate governance restrictions that were applicable to the Company during the period in which the Treasury held its investment in the Preferred Shares. Subsequently, on August 22, 2012, the Company repurchased the Warrant from the Treasury for \$2.67 million and in December 2012, the Company repurchased 24,000 of the outstanding Preferred Shares. The Company redeemed the remaining 28,000 outstanding Preferred Shares on March 24, 2014.

MARKET AREAS AND COMPETITION

The banking industry in general, and in the southeastern United States specifically, is highly competitive and dramatic changes continue to occur throughout the industry. Our select market areas in Georgia, Alabama, Florida and South Carolina have experienced strong population growth over the past 20 to 30 years, but have endured significant economic challenges in recent years. Intense market demands, national and local economic pressures, interest rates near zero and increased customer awareness of product and service differences among financial institutions have forced banks to diversify their services and become much more cost effective. Over the past few years, our Bank has faced strong competition in attracting deposits at profitable levels. Competition for deposits comes from other commercial banks, thrift institutions, mortgage bankers, finance companies, credit unions and issuers of securities such as brokerage firms. Interest rates, convenience of office locations and marketing are all significant factors in our Bank's competition for deposits.

Competition for loans comes from other commercial banks, thrift institutions, savings banks, insurance companies, consumer finance companies, credit unions and other institutional lenders. In order to remain competitive, our Bank has varied interest rates and loan fees to some degree as well as increased the number and complexity of services provided. We have not varied or altered our underwriting standards in any material respect in response to competitor willingness to do so and in some markets have not been able to experience the growth in loans that we would have preferred. Competition is affected by the general availability of lendable funds, general and local economic conditions, current interest rate levels and other factors that are not readily predictable.

Competition among providers of financial products and services continues to increase with consumers having the opportunity to select from a growing variety of traditional and nontraditional alternatives. The industry continues to consolidate, which affects competition by eliminating some regional and local institutions, while strengthening the franchise of acquirers. Management expects that competition will become more intense in the future due to changes in state and federal laws and regulations and the entry of additional bank and nonbank competitors. See "Supervision and Regulation" under this Item.

EMPLOYEES

At December 31, 2015, the Company employed approximately 1,304 full-time-equivalent employees. We consider our relationship with our employees to be good.

We have adopted the Ameris Bancorp 401(k) Profit Sharing Plan, as a retirement plan for our employees. This plan provides deferral of compensation by our employees and contributions by Ameris. We also maintain a comprehensive employee benefits program providing, among other benefits, hospitalization and major medical insurance and life insurance. Management considers these benefits to be competitive with those offered by other financial institutions in our market areas. Our employees are not represented by any collective bargaining group.

RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The Company makes loans to our directors and their affiliates and to banking officers. These loans are made on substantially the same terms as those prevailing at the time for comparable transactions and do not involve more than normal credit risk. At December 31, 2015, we had approximately \$4.02 billion in total loans outstanding, of which approximately \$3.8 million were outstanding to certain directors and their affiliates. Company policy prohibits loans to executive officers.

SUPERVISION AND REGULATION

General

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.

Federal Bank Holding Company Regulation and Structure

As a bank holding company, we are subject to regulation under the Bank Holding Company Act and to the supervision, examination and reporting requirements of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (the "Federal Reserve"). Our Bank has a Georgia state charter and is subject to regulation, supervision and examination by the FDIC and the Georgia Department of Banking and Finance (the "GDBF").

The Bank Holding Company Act requires every bank holding company to obtain the prior approval of the Federal Reserve before:

- it may acquire direct or indirect ownership or control of any voting shares of any bank if, after the acquisition, the bank holding company will directly or indirectly own or control more than 5% of the voting shares of the bank;
- it or any of its subsidiaries, other than a bank, may acquire all or substantially all of the assets of any bank; or
- it may merge or consolidate with any other bank holding company.

The Bank Holding Company Act further provides that the Federal Reserve may not approve any transaction that would result in a monopoly or that would substantially lessen competition in the banking business, unless the public interest in meeting the needs of the communities to be served outweighs the anti-competitive effects. The Federal Reserve is also required to consider the financial and managerial resources and future prospects of the bank holding companies and banks involved and the convenience and needs of the communities to be served. Consideration of financial resources generally focuses on capital adequacy, and consideration of convenience and needs issues focuses, in part, on the performance under the Community Reinvestment Act, both of which are discussed elsewhere in more detail.

Subject to various exceptions, the Bank Holding Company Act and the Change in Bank Control Act, together with related regulations, require Federal Reserve approval prior to any person or company acquiring “control” of a bank holding company. Control is conclusively presumed to exist if an individual or company acquires 25% or more of any class of voting securities of a bank holding company. Control is also presumed to exist, although rebuttable, if a person or company acquires 10% or more, but less than 25%, of any class of voting securities and either:

- the bank holding company has registered securities under Section 12 of the Exchange Act; or
- no other person owns a greater percentage of that class of voting securities immediately after the transaction.

Our Common Stock is registered under Section 12 of the Exchange Act. The regulations provide a procedure for challenging rebuttable presumptions of control.

The Bank Holding Company Act generally prohibits a bank holding company from engaging in activities other than banking; managing or controlling banks or other permissible subsidiaries and acquiring or retaining direct or indirect control of any company engaged in any activities other than activities closely related to banking or managing or controlling banks. In determining whether a particular activity is permissible, the Federal Reserve considers whether performing the activity can be expected to produce benefits to the public that outweigh possible adverse effects, such as undue concentration of resources, decreased or unfair competition, conflicts of interest or unsound banking practices. The Federal Reserve has the power to order a bank holding company or its subsidiaries to terminate any activity or control of any subsidiary when the continuation of the activity or control constitutes a serious risk to the financial safety, soundness or stability of any bank subsidiary of that bank holding company.

Under the Bank Holding Company Act, a bank holding company may file an election with the Federal Reserve to be treated as a financial holding company and engage in an expanded list of financial activities. The election must be accompanied by a certification that all of the company’s insured depository institution subsidiaries are “well capitalized” and “well managed.” Additionally, the Community Reinvestment Act rating of each subsidiary bank must be satisfactory or better. Effective August 24, 2000, pursuant to a previously-filed election with the Federal Reserve, Ameris became a financial holding company. As such, we may engage in activities that are financial in nature or incidental or complementary to financial activities, including insurance underwriting, securities underwriting and dealing, and making merchant banking investments in commercial and financial companies. If the Bank ceases to be “well capitalized” or “well managed” under applicable regulatory standards, the Federal Reserve may, among other things, place limitations on our ability to conduct these broader financial activities. In addition, if the Bank receives a rating of less than satisfactory under the Community Reinvestment Act, we would be prohibited from engaging in any additional activities other than those permissible for bank holding companies that are not financial holding companies. If, after becoming a financial holding company and undertaking activities not permissible for a bank holding company, the company fails to continue to meet any of the prerequisites for financial holding company status, including those described above, the company must enter into an agreement with the Federal Reserve to comply with all applicable capital and management requirements. If the company does not return to compliance within 180 days, the Federal Reserve may order the company to divest its subsidiary banks or the company may discontinue or divest investments in companies engaged in activities permissible only for a bank holding company that has elected to be treated as a financial holding company.

Under Federal Reserve policy, we are expected to act as a source of financial strength for the Bank and to commit resources to support the Bank. This support may be required at times when, without this Federal Reserve policy, we might not be inclined to provide it. In addition, any capital loans made by us to the Bank will be repaid only after its deposits and various other obligations are repaid in full.

Our Bank is also subject to numerous state and federal statutes and regulations that affect its business, activities and operations and is supervised and examined by state and federal bank regulatory agencies. The FDIC and the GDBF regularly examine the operations of our Bank and are given the authority to approve or disapprove mergers, consolidations, the establishment of branches and similar corporate actions. These agencies also have the power to prevent the continuance or development of unsafe or unsound banking practices or other violations of law.

Payment of Dividends and Other Restrictions

Ameris is a legal entity separate and distinct from its subsidiaries. While there are various legal and regulatory limitations under federal and state law on the extent to which our Bank can pay dividends or otherwise supply funds to Ameris, the principal source of our cash revenues is dividends from our Bank. The prior approval of applicable regulatory authorities is required if the total amount of all dividends declared by the Bank in any calendar year exceeds 50% of the Bank's net profits for the previous year. The relevant federal and state regulatory agencies also have authority to prohibit a state member bank or bank holding company, which would include Ameris and the Bank, from engaging in what, in the opinion of such regulatory body, constitutes an unsafe or unsound practice in conducting its business. The payment of dividends could, depending upon the financial condition of the subsidiary, be deemed to constitute an unsafe or unsound practice in conducting its business.

Under Georgia law, the prior approval of the GDBF is required before any cash dividends may be paid by a state bank if: (i) total classified assets at the most recent examination of such bank exceed 80% of the equity capital (as defined, which includes the reserve for loan losses) of such bank; (ii) the aggregate amount of dividends declared or anticipated to be declared in the calendar year exceeds 50% of the net profits (as defined) for the previous calendar year; or (iii) the ratio of equity capital to adjusted total assets is less than 6%. As of December 31, 2015, there was approximately \$22.4 million of retained earnings of our Bank available for payment of cash dividends under applicable regulations without obtaining regulatory approval.

In addition, our Bank is subject to limitations under Section 23A of the Federal Reserve Act with respect to extensions of credit to, investments in and certain other transactions with Ameris. Furthermore, loans and extensions of credit are also subject to various collateral requirements.

The Federal Reserve has issued a policy statement on the payment of cash dividends by bank holding companies, which expresses the Federal Reserve's view that a bank holding company should pay cash dividends only to the extent that the holding company's net income for the past year is sufficient to cover both the cash dividends and a rate of earning retention that is consistent with the holding company's capital needs, asset quality and overall financial condition. The Federal Reserve also indicated that it would be inappropriate for a holding company experiencing serious financial problems to borrow funds to pay dividends. Furthermore, under the prompt corrective action regulations adopted by the Federal Reserve, the Federal Reserve may prohibit a bank holding company from paying any dividends if one or more of the holding company's bank subsidiaries are classified as undercapitalized.

A bank holding company is required to give the Federal Reserve prior written notice of any purchase or redemption of its outstanding equity securities if the gross consideration for the purchase or redemption, when combined with the net consideration paid for all such purchases or redemptions during the preceding 12 months, is equal to 10% or more of its consolidated net worth. The Federal Reserve may disapprove such a purchase or redemption if it determines that the proposal would constitute an unsafe or unsound practice or would violate any law, regulation, Federal Reserve order or any condition imposed by, or written agreement with, the Federal Reserve.

Capital Adequacy

We must comply with the Federal Reserve's established capital adequacy standards, and our Bank is required to comply with the capital adequacy standards established by the FDIC. The Federal Reserve has promulgated two basic measures of capital adequacy for bank holding companies: a risk-based measure and a leverage measure. A bank holding company must satisfy all applicable capital standards to be considered in compliance.

The risk-based capital standards are designed to make regulatory capital requirements more sensitive to differences in risk profile among banks and bank holding companies, account for off-balance-sheet exposure and minimize disincentives for holding liquid assets.

Assets and off-balance-sheet items are assigned to broad risk categories, each with appropriate weights. The resulting capital ratios represent capital as a percentage of total risk-weighted assets and off-balance-sheet items.

The minimum guideline for the ratio of total capital to risk-weighted assets is 8%. At least one-half of total capital must be comprised of Tier 1 Capital, which is common stock, undivided profits, minority interests in the equity accounts of consolidated subsidiaries and noncumulative perpetual preferred stock, less goodwill and certain other intangible assets. The remainder may consist of Tier 2 Capital, which is subordinated debt, other preferred stock and a limited amount of loan loss reserves. Since 2001, our consolidated capital ratios have increased due to the issuance of trust preferred securities. At December 31, 2015, all of our trust preferred securities were included in Tier 1 Capital. At December 31, 2015, our total risk-based capital ratio, our Tier 1 risk-based capital ratio and our common equity Tier 1 capital ratio were 11.45% 10.96% and 9.54%, respectively. Neither Ameris nor the Bank has been advised by any federal banking agency of any additional specific minimum capital ratio requirement applicable to it. On January 29, 2015, we completed a private placement of 5,320,000 shares of Common Stock at a price of \$22.50 per share. We received net proceeds from the issuance of approximately \$114.5 million (after deducting placement agent commissions and expenses).

In addition, the Federal Reserve has established minimum leverage ratio guidelines for bank holding companies. These guidelines provide for a minimum ratio of Tier 1 Capital to average assets, less goodwill and certain other intangible assets, of 3% for bank holding companies that meet specified criteria. All other bank holding companies generally are required to maintain a minimum leverage ratio of 4%. At December 31, 2015, our ratio was 8.70%, compared with 8.94% at December 31, 2014. The guidelines also provide that bank holding companies experiencing internal growth or making acquisitions will be expected to maintain strong capital positions substantially above the minimum supervisory levels without significant reliance on intangible assets. Furthermore, the Federal Reserve has indicated that it will consider a “tangible Tier 1 Capital leverage ratio” and other indications of capital strength in evaluating proposals for expansion or new activities. The Federal Reserve has not advised Ameris of any additional specific minimum leverage ratio or tangible Tier 1 Capital leverage ratio applicable to it.

Failure to meet capital guidelines could subject a bank to a variety of enforcement remedies, including issuance of a capital directive, the termination of deposit insurance by the FDIC, a prohibition on taking brokered deposits and certain other restrictions on its business. As described below, the FDIC can impose substantial additional restrictions upon FDIC-insured depository institutions that fail to meet applicable capital requirements.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Act (or “FDI Act”) requires the federal regulatory agencies to take “prompt corrective action” if a depository institution does not meet minimum capital requirements. The FDI Act establishes five capital tiers: “well capitalized,” “adequately capitalized,” “undercapitalized,” “significantly undercapitalized” and “critically undercapitalized.” A depository institution’s capital tier will depend upon how its capital levels compare to various relevant capital measures and certain other factors, as established by regulation.

The federal bank regulatory agencies have adopted regulations establishing relevant capital measures and relevant capital levels applicable to FDIC-insured banks. The relevant capital measures are the Total Capital ratio, Tier 1 Capital ratio, Common Equity Tier 1 Capital ratio and leverage ratio. Under the regulations, an FDIC-insured bank will be:

- “well capitalized” if it has a Total Capital ratio of 10% or greater, a Tier 1 Capital ratio of 8% or greater, a Common Equity Tier 1 Capital ratio of 6.5% or greater and a leverage ratio of 5% or greater and is not subject to any order or written directive by the appropriate regulatory authority to meet and maintain a specific capital level for any capital measure;
- “adequately capitalized” if it has a Total Capital ratio of 8% or greater, a Tier 1 Capital ratio of 6% or greater, a Common Equity Tier 1 Capital ratio of 4.5% or greater and a leverage ratio of 4% or greater (3% in certain circumstances) and is not “well capitalized;”
- “undercapitalized” if it has a Total Capital ratio of less than 8%, a Tier 1 Capital ratio of less than 6%, a Common Equity Tier 1 Capital ratio of less than 4.5% or a leverage ratio of less than 4%;
- “significantly undercapitalized” if it has a Total Capital ratio of less than 6%, a Tier 1 Capital ratio of less than 4%, a Common Equity Tier 1 Capital ratio of less than 3% or a leverage ratio of less than 3%; and
- “critically undercapitalized” if its tangible equity is equal to or less than 2% of average quarterly tangible assets.

An institution may be downgraded to, or deemed to be in, a capital category that is lower than is indicated by its capital ratios if it is determined to be in an unsafe or unsound condition or if it receives an unsatisfactory examination rating with respect to certain matters. As of December 31, 2015, our Bank had capital levels that qualify as “well capitalized” under such regulations.

The FDI Act generally prohibits an FDIC-insured bank from making a capital distribution (including payment of a dividend) or paying any management fee to its holding company if the bank would thereafter be “undercapitalized.” “Undercapitalized” banks are subject to growth limitations and are required to submit a capital restoration plan. The federal regulators may not accept a capital plan without determining, among other things, that the plan is based on realistic assumptions and is likely to succeed in restoring the bank’s capital. In addition, for a capital restoration plan to be acceptable, the bank’s parent holding company must guarantee that the institution will comply with such capital restoration plan. The aggregate liability of the parent holding company is limited to the lesser of: (i) an amount equal to 5% of the bank’s total assets at the time it became “undercapitalized”; and (ii) the amount which is necessary (or would have been necessary) to bring the institution into compliance with all capital standards applicable with respect to such institution as of the time it fails to comply with the plan. If a bank fails to submit an acceptable plan, it is treated as if it is “significantly undercapitalized.”

“Significantly undercapitalized” insured banks may be subject to a number of requirements and restrictions, including orders to sell sufficient voting stock to become “adequately capitalized,” requirements to reduce total assets and the cessation of receipt of deposits from correspondent banks. “Critically undercapitalized” institutions are subject to the appointment of a receiver or conservator. A bank that is not “well capitalized” is also subject to certain limitations relating to brokered deposits.

The regulatory capital framework under which we operate has changed, and is expected to continue to change, in significant respects as a result of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (the “Dodd-Frank Act”), which was enacted in July 2010 and includes certain provisions concerning the capital regulations of U.S. banking regulators. These provisions are intended to subject bank holding companies to the same capital requirements as their bank subsidiaries and to eliminate or significantly reduce the use of hybrid capital instruments, especially trust preferred securities, as regulatory capital. Although a significant number of the rules and regulations mandated by the Dodd-Frank Act have been finalized, many of the new requirements called for have yet to be implemented and will likely be subject to implementing regulations over the course of several years. Given the uncertainty associated with the manner in which the provisions of the Dodd-Frank Act will be implemented by the various regulatory agencies, the full extent of the impact such requirements will have on financial institutions’ operations is unclear. The changes resulting from the Dodd-Frank Act may impact the profitability of our business activities, require changes to certain of our business practices, impose upon us more stringent capital, liquidity and leverage ratio requirements or otherwise adversely affect our business. These changes may also require us to invest significant management attention and resources to evaluate and make necessary changes in order to comply with new statutory and regulatory requirements.

In July 2013, the federal banking agencies approved an interim final rule that adopts a series of previously proposed rules to conform U.S. regulatory capital rules with the international regulatory standards agreed to by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision in the accord referred to as “Basel III” and to implement requirements of the Dodd-Frank Act. The adopted regulations established new higher capital ratio requirements, narrowed the definitions of capital, imposed new operating restrictions on banking organizations with insufficient capital buffers and increased the risk weighting of certain assets. The Company and the Bank were required to comply with the new capital requirements beginning January 1, 2015.

The regulatory changes found in the new final rule include the following:

- The final rule established a new capital measure called “Common Equity Tier I Capital” consisting of common stock and related surplus, retained earnings, accumulated other comprehensive income and, subject to certain adjustments, minority common equity interests in subsidiaries. Unlike prior rules which excluded unrealized gains and losses on available for sale debt securities from regulatory capital, the final rule generally requires accumulated other comprehensive income to flow through to regulatory capital. Depository institutions and their holding companies are now required to maintain Common Equity Tier I Capital equal to 4.5% of risk-weighted assets. Additionally, the regulations increased the required ratio of Tier I Capital to risk-weighted assets from 4% to 6%. Tier I Capital consists of Common Equity Tier I Capital plus Additional Tier I Capital which includes non-cumulative perpetual preferred stock. Neither cumulative preferred stock (other than certain preferred stock issued to the U.S. Treasury) nor trust preferred securities qualify as Additional Tier I Capital, but they may be included in Tier II Capital along with qualifying subordinated debt. The new regulations also require a minimum Tier I leverage ratio of 4% for all institutions, while the minimum required ratio of total capital to risk-weighted assets remains at 8%.
- In addition to increased capital requirements, depository institutions and their holding companies will be required to maintain a capital buffer of at least 2.5% of risk-weighted assets over and above the minimum risk-based capital requirements in order to avoid limitations on the payment of dividends, the repurchase of shares or the payment of discretionary bonuses. The capital conservation buffer requirement is being phased in, beginning January 1, 2016, requiring during 2016 a buffer amount greater than 0.625% in order to avoid these limitations, and increasing the amount each year until, beginning January 1, 2019, the buffer amount must be greater than 2.5% in order to avoid the limitations.
- The prompt corrective action regulations, under the final rule, incorporate a Common Equity Tier I Capital requirement and raise the capital requirements for certain capital categories. In order to be adequately capitalized for purposes of the prompt corrective action regulations, a banking organization is required to have at least an 8% Total Risk-Based Capital Ratio, a 6% Tier I Risk-Based Capital Ratio, a 4.5% Common Equity Tier I Risk Based Capital Ratio and a 4% Tier I Leverage Ratio. To be well capitalized, a banking organization is required to have at least a 10% Total Risk-Based Capital Ratio, an 8% Tier I Risk-Based Capital Ratio, a 6.5% Common Equity Tier I Risk-Based Capital Ratio and a 5% Tier I Leverage Ratio.

FDIC Insurance Assessments

The FDIC insures the deposit accounts of the Bank up to the maximum amount provided by law. The general insurance limit is \$250,000.

The FDIC assesses deposit insurance premiums on each insured institution quarterly based on annualized rates for one of four risk categories. Under the rules in effect through March 31, 2011, these rates are applied to the institution's deposits. Each institution is assigned to one of four risk categories based on its capital, supervisory ratings and other factors. Well capitalized institutions that are financially sound with only a few minor weaknesses are assigned to Risk Category I. Risk Categories II, III and IV present progressively greater risks to the Deposit Insurance Fund ("DIF"). A range of initial base assessment rates applies to each risk category, subject to adjustments based on an institution's unsecured debt, secured liabilities and brokered deposits, such that the total base assessment rates after adjustments range from 7 to 24 basis points for Risk Category I, 17 to 43 basis points for Risk Category II, 27 to 58 basis points for Risk Category III, and 40 to 77.5 basis points for Risk Category IV.

As required by the Dodd-Frank Act, the FDIC adopted rules effective April 1, 2011 under which insurance premium assessments are based on an institution's total assets minus its tangible equity (defined as Tier 1 capital) instead of its deposits. Under these rules, an institution with total assets of less than \$10 billion will be assigned to a risk category as described above, and a range of initial base assessment rates will apply to each category, subject to adjustment downward based on unsecured debt issued by the institution and, except for an institution in Risk Category I, adjustment upward if the institution's brokered deposits exceed 10% of its domestic deposits, to produce total base assessment rates. Total base assessment rates range from 2.5 to 9 basis points for Risk Category I, 9 to 24 basis points for Risk Category II, 18 to 33 basis points for Risk Category III, and 30 to 45 basis points for Risk Category IV, all subject to further adjustment upward if the institution holds more than a de minimis amount of unsecured debt issued by another FDIC-insured institution. The FDIC may increase or decrease its rates by 2.0 basis points without further rulemaking. In an emergency, the FDIC may also impose a special assessment.

The Company's insurance assessments during 2015, 2014 and 2013 were approximately \$3.5 million, \$3.0 million and \$2.3 million, respectively.

Pursuant to the Dodd-Frank Act, the FDIC has established 2.0% as the designated reserve ratio ("DRR"), which is the ratio of the DIF to insured deposits. The FDIC has adopted a plan under which it will meet the statutory minimum DRR of 1.35% by September 30, 2020, the deadline imposed by the Dodd-Frank Act. The Dodd-Frank Act requires the FDIC to offset the effect of the increase in the statutory minimum DRR to 1.35% on institutions with assets of less than \$10 billion from the former statutory minimum of 1.15%. The FDIC has not yet announced how it will implement this offset or how larger institutions will be affected by it.

Acquisitions

As an active acquirer, we must comply with numerous laws related to our acquisition activity. Under the Bank Holding Company Act, a bank holding company may not directly or indirectly acquire ownership or control of more than 5% of the voting shares or substantially all of the assets of any bank or merge or consolidate with another bank holding company without the prior approval of the Federal Reserve. Current federal law authorizes interstate acquisitions of banks and bank holding companies without geographic limitation. Furthermore, a bank headquartered in one state is authorized to merge with a bank headquartered in another state, as long as neither of the states has opted out of such interstate merger authority prior to such date, and subject to any state requirement that the target bank shall have been in existence and operating for a minimum period of time, not to exceed five years, and to certain deposit market-share limitations. After a bank has established branches in a state through an interstate merger transaction, the bank may establish and acquire additional branches at any location in the state where a bank headquartered in that state could have established or acquired branches under applicable federal or state law.

Community Reinvestment Act

The Community Reinvestment Act requires federal bank regulatory agencies to encourage financial institutions to meet the credit needs of low and moderate-income borrowers in their local communities. An institution's size and business strategy determines the type of examination that it will receive. Large, retail-oriented institutions are examined using a performance-based lending, investment and service test. Small institutions are examined using a streamlined approach. All institutions may opt to be evaluated under a strategic plan formulated with community input and pre-approved by the bank regulatory agency.

The Community Reinvestment Act regulations provide for certain disclosure obligations. Each institution must post a notice advising the public of its right to comment to the institution and its regulator on the institution's Community Reinvestment Act performance and to review the institution's Community Reinvestment Act public file. Each lending institution must maintain for public inspection a file that includes a listing of branch locations and services, a summary of lending activity, a map of its communities and any written comments from the public on its performance in meeting community credit needs. The Community Reinvestment Act requires public disclosure of a financial institution's written Community Reinvestment Act evaluations. This promotes enforcement of Community Reinvestment Act requirements by providing the public with the status of a particular institution's community reinvestment record.

Consumer Protection Laws

The Bank is subject to a number of federal and state laws designed to protect borrowers and promote lending to various sectors of the economy and population. These laws include the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, the Fair Credit Reporting Act, the Truth in Lending Act, the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act, the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act and state law counterparts.

In addition, the Dodd-Frank Act created a new agency, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (“CFPB”), which has been given the power to promulgate and enforce federal consumer protection laws. Depository institutions are subject to the CFPB’s rulemaking authority, while existing federal bank regulatory agencies retain examination and enforcement authority for such institutions. The focus of the CFPB is on the following: (i) risks to consumers and compliance with the federal consumer financial laws; (ii) the markets in which firms operate and risks to consumers posed by activities in those markets; (iii) depository institutions that offer a wide variety of consumer financial products and services; (iv) depository institutions with a more specialized focus; and (v) non-depository companies that offer one or more consumer financial products or services.

Financial Privacy

Federal law currently contains extensive customer privacy protection provisions. Under these provisions, a financial institution must provide to its customers, at the inception of the customer relationship and annually thereafter, the institution’s policies and procedures regarding the handling of customers’ nonpublic personal financial information. These provisions also provide that, except for certain limited exceptions, an institution may not provide such personal information to unaffiliated third parties unless the institution discloses to the customer that such information may be so provided and the customer is given the opportunity to opt out of such disclosure. Federal law makes it a criminal offense, except in limited circumstances, to obtain or attempt to obtain customer information of a financial nature by fraudulent or deceptive means.

Fiscal and Monetary Policy

Banking is a business which depends on interest rate differentials for success. In general, the difference between the interest paid by a bank on its deposits and its other borrowings, and the interest received by a bank on its loans and securities holdings, constitutes the major portion of a bank’s earnings. Thus, our earnings and growth will be subject to the influence of economic conditions generally, both domestic and foreign, and also to the monetary and fiscal policies of the United States and its agencies, particularly the Federal Reserve. The Federal Reserve regulates the supply of money through various means, including open market dealings in United States government securities, the discount rate at which banks may borrow from the Federal Reserve and the reserve requirements on deposits. The nature and timing of any changes in such policies and their effect on Ameris cannot be known at this time.

Current and future legislation and the policies established by federal and state regulatory authorities will affect our future operations. Banking legislation and regulations may limit our growth and the return to our investors by restricting certain of our activities.

In addition, capital requirements could be changed and have the effect of restricting our activities or requiring additional capital to be maintained. We cannot predict with certainty what changes, if any, will be made to existing federal and state legislation and regulations or the effect that such changes may have on our business.

Federal Home Loan Bank System

Our Company has a correspondent relationship with the FHLB of Atlanta, which is one of 12 regional FHLBs that administer the home financing credit function of savings companies. Each FHLB serves as a reserve or central bank for its members within its assigned region. FHLBs are funded primarily from proceeds derived from the sale of consolidated obligations of the FHLB system and make loans to members (i.e., advances) in accordance with policies and procedures, established by the Board of Directors of the FHLB which are subject to the oversight of the Federal Housing Finance Board. All advances from the FHLB are required to be fully secured by sufficient collateral as determined by the FHLB. In addition, all long-term advances are required to provide funds for residential home financing.

The FHLB provides certain services to our Company such as processing checks and other items, buying and selling federal funds, handling money transfers and exchanges, shipping coin and currency, providing security and safekeeping of funds or other valuable items and furnishing limited management information and advice. As compensation for these services, our Company maintains certain balances with the FHLB in interest-bearing accounts.

Under federal law, the FHLBs are required to provide funds for the resolution of troubled savings companies and to contribute to low and moderately-priced housing programs through direct loans or interest subsidies on advances targeted for community investment and low and moderate-income housing projects.

Real Estate Lending Evaluations

The federal regulators have adopted uniform standards for evaluations of loans secured by real estate or made to finance improvements to real estate. Banks are required to establish and maintain written internal real estate lending policies consistent with safe and sound banking practices and appropriate to the size of the institution and the nature and scope of its operations. The regulations establish loan-to-value ratio limitations on real estate loans. Our Company's loan policies establish limits on loan-to-value ratios that are equal to or less than those established in such regulations.

Commercial Real Estate Concentrations

Our lending operations may be subject to enhanced scrutiny by federal banking regulators based on our concentration of commercial real estate loans. The federal banking regulators previously issued guidance reminding financial institutions of the risk posed by commercial real estate ("CRE") lending concentrations. CRE loans generally include land development, construction loans, and loans secured by multifamily property, and nonfarm, nonresidential real property where the primary source of repayment is derived from rental income associated with the property. The guidance prescribes the following guidelines for its examiners to help identify institutions that are potentially exposed to significant CRE risk and may warrant greater supervisory scrutiny:

- total reported loans for construction, land development and other land ("C&D") represent 100% or more of the institution's total capital; or
- total CRE loans represent 300% or more of the institution's total capital, and the outstanding balance of the institution's CRE loan portfolio has increased by 50% or more.

As of December 31, 2015, excluding purchased non-covered and covered assets, our C&D concentration as a percentage of capital totaled 47.5% and our CRE concentration, net of owner-occupied loans, as a percentage of capital totaled 144.0%. Including purchased non-covered and covered loans subject to loss-sharing agreements with the FDIC, the Company's C&D concentration as a percentage of capital totaled 63.0% and our CRE concentration, net of owner-occupied loans, as a percentage of capital totaled 189.0%.

Limitations on Incentive Compensation

The Dodd-Frank Act requires the federal banking regulators and other agencies, including the SEC, to issue regulations or guidelines requiring disclosure to the regulators of incentive-based compensation arrangements and to prohibit incentive-based compensation arrangements for directors, officers or employees that encourage inappropriate risks by providing excessive compensation, fees or benefits or that could lead to material financial loss to a financial institution. The federal bank regulatory agencies have issued guidance on incentive compensation policies, which covers all employees who have the ability to materially affect the risk profile of an institution, either individually or as part of a group, that is based upon the key principles that a financial institution's incentive compensation arrangements should (i) provide incentives that do not encourage risk-taking beyond the institution's ability to effectively identify and manage risks, (ii) be compatible with effective internal controls and risk management and (iii) be supported by strong corporate governance, including active and effective oversight by the institution's board of directors and appropriate policies, procedures and monitoring.

As part of the regular, risk-focused examination process, the incentive compensation arrangements of banking organizations will be reviewed, and the regulator's findings will be incorporated into the organization's supervisory ratings, which can affect the organization's ability to make acquisitions and take other actions. Enforcement actions may be taken against a banking organization if its incentive compensation arrangements, or related risk-management control or governance processes, pose a risk to the organization's safety and soundness and the organization is not taking prompt and effective measures to correct any deficiencies.

The scope and content of federal bank regulatory agencies' policies on executive compensation are continuing to develop and are likely to continue evolving in the near future. It cannot be determined at this time whether compliance with such policies will adversely affect the Company's ability to hire, retain and motivate its key employees.

Evolving Legislation and Regulatory Action

The Dodd-Frank Act implements many new changes in the way financial and banking operations are regulated in the United States. Many aspects of the Dodd-Frank Act are subject to further rulemaking and will take effect over several years, with the result that the overall financial impact on the Company and the Bank cannot be anticipated at this time.

In addition, from time to time, various other legislative and regulatory initiatives are introduced in Congress and state legislatures, as well as by regulatory agencies, that may impact the Company or the Bank. Such initiatives may include proposals to expand or contract the powers of bank holding companies and depository institutions or proposals to substantially change the financial institution regulatory system. Such legislation could change banking statutes and the operating environment of Ameris in substantial and unpredictable ways. If enacted, such legislation could increase or decrease the cost of doing business, limit or expand permissible activities or affect the competitive balance among banks, savings associations, credit unions and other financial institutions. The Company cannot predict whether any such legislation will be enacted, and, if enacted, the effect that it, or any implementing regulations, would have on the financial condition or results of operations of the Company. A change in statutes, regulations or regulatory policies applicable to the Company or the Bank could have a material effect on the business of the Company.

ITEM 1A. RISK FACTORS

An investment in our Common Stock is subject to risks inherent in our business. The material risks and uncertainties that management believes affect Ameris are described below. Before making an investment decision, you should carefully consider the risks and uncertainties described below, together with all of the other information included or incorporated by reference in this Annual Report. The risks and uncertainties described below are not the only ones facing the Company. Additional risks and uncertainties that management is not aware of or focused on or that management currently deems immaterial may also impair the Company's business operations. This Annual Report is qualified in its entirety by these risk factors.

If any of the following risks or uncertainties actually occurs, the Company's financial condition and results of operations could be materially and adversely affected. If this were to happen, the value of the Common Stock could decline significantly, and you could lose all or part of your investment.

RISKS RELATED TO OUR COMPANY AND INDUSTRY

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

The capital and credit markets have been experiencing volatility and disruption for over seven 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 defensive strategies, including seeking additional capital. 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. Although the difficult conditions in the financial markets may ease in the future, we are managing the Company 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 institutions 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 this may result in increased regulatory scrutiny.
- We may expect to face increased regulation of our industry. 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.

Legislation and regulatory proposals enacted in response to market and economic conditions 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 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 2015, net interest income made up 67.2% 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.

Our concentration of real estate loans subjects the Company 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 several 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.

We face additional risks due to our increased mortgage banking activities that could negatively impact net income and profitability.

We sell substantially all of the mortgage loans that we originate. The sale of these loans generates noninterest income and can be a source of liquidity for the Bank. Disruption in the secondary market for residential mortgage loans as well as declines in real estate values could result in one or more of the following:

- our inability to sell mortgage loans on the secondary market, which could negatively impact our liquidity position;
- declines in real estate values could decrease the potential of mortgage originations, which could negatively impact our earnings;
- if it is determined that loans were made in breach of our representations and warranties to the secondary market, we could incur losses associated with the loans;
- increased compliance requirements could result in higher compliance costs, higher foreclosure proceedings or lower loan origination volume, all which could negatively impact future earnings; and
- a rise in interest rates could cause a decline in mortgage originations, which could negatively impact our earnings.

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 acquisitions 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.

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 the Common Stock and interest and principal on the Company's debt. Various federal and state laws and regulations limit the amount of dividends that the Bank may pay to the Company. Also, the Company's 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 the Company, the Company may not be able to service debt, pay obligations or pay dividends on the Common Stock and its business, financial condition and results of operations may be materially adversely affected. Consequently, cash-based activities, including further investments in the Bank or in 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 GDBF. 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 uncertain conditions in the national economy and in the money markets, we cannot predict with certainty possible future changes in interest rates, deposit levels, loan demand or our business and earnings.

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 (“NASDAQ”). 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 our Company may cause our stock price to fall and significantly limit our ability to access the markets for additional capital. 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 in 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. 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 our Company 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.

A security breach, cyber-attack or interruption of our technology systems may impact our financial results and customer retention.

We rely on data processing systems on a variety of computing platforms and networks. While we believe we have implemented appropriate measures to mitigate potential risks to our operations and technology functions, we cannot be certain that a security breach, cyber-attack or interruption will not occur. Such an interruption or security breach could disrupt our operations or result in the disclosure of sensitive, personal customer information. This could have a negative impact on our financial results through damage to our reputation, costs to remediate the situation, potential civil litigation, additional regulatory scrutiny, loss of customers and potential financial liability.

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, the Company may rely on information furnished by or on behalf of customers and counterparties, including financial statements, credit reports and other financial information. The Company 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 the Company's business and, in turn, the Company's 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.

The Company's 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 the Company can be intense and the Company may not be able to hire people or to retain them. The unexpected loss of services of one or more of the Company's key personnel could have a material adverse impact on the Company's business because of their skills, knowledge of the Company's market, years of industry experience and the difficulty of promptly finding qualified replacement personnel.

We engage in acquisitions of other businesses from time to time. 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 will likely need to make additional investments 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.

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.

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 many of 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, some of which have already expired; 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.

RISKS RELATED TO OUR COMMON STOCK

The price of our Common Stock is volatile and may decline.

The trading price of our Common Stock may fluctuate widely as a result of a number of factors, many of which are outside our control. In addition, the stock market is subject to fluctuations in the share prices and trading volumes that affect the market prices of the shares of many companies. These broad market fluctuations have adversely affected and may continue to adversely affect the market price of our Common Stock. Among the factors that could affect our stock price are:

- actual or anticipated quarterly fluctuations in our operating results and financial condition;
- changes in revenue or earnings estimates or publication of research reports and recommendations by financial analysts or actions taken by rating agencies with respect to our securities or those of other financial institutions;
- failure to meet analysts' revenue or earnings estimates;
- speculation in the press or investment community;
- strategic actions by us or our competitors, such as acquisitions or restructurings;
- actions by institutional shareholders;
- fluctuations in the stock price and operating results of our competitors;
- general market conditions and, in particular, developments related to market conditions for the financial services industry;
- proposed or adopted regulatory changes or developments, including changes in accounting policies;
- anticipated or pending investigations, proceedings or litigation that involve or affect us; or
- domestic and international economic factors unrelated to our performance.

A significant decline in our stock price could result in substantial losses for individual shareholders and could lead to costly and disruptive securities litigation.

Securities issued by us, including our Common Stock, are not FDIC insured.

Securities issued by us, including our Common Stock, are not savings or deposit accounts or other obligations of any bank and are not insured by the FDIC, the Deposit Insurance Fund or any other governmental agency or instrumentality, or any private insurer, and are subject to investment risk, including the possible loss of principal.

We may issue debt and equity securities or securities convertible into equity securities, any of which may be senior to our Common Stock as to distributions and in liquidation, which could negatively affect the value of our Common Stock.

In the future, we may attempt to increase our capital resources by entering into debt or debt-like financing that is unsecured or secured by up to all of our assets, or by issuing additional debt or equity securities, which could include issuances of secured or unsecured commercial paper, medium-term notes, senior notes, subordinated notes, preferred stock or securities convertible into or exchangeable for equity securities. In the event of our liquidation, our lenders and holders of our debt and preferred securities would receive a distribution of our available assets before distributions to the holders of our Common Stock. Because our decision to incur debt and issue securities in our future offerings will depend on market conditions and other factors beyond our control, we cannot predict or estimate with certainty the amount, timing or nature of our future offerings and debt financings. Further, market conditions could require us to accept less favorable terms for the issuance of our securities in the future.

You may not receive dividends on the Common Stock.

Holders of our Common Stock are only entitled to receive such dividends as our Board of Directors may declare out of funds legally available for such payments. In 2010, in response to anticipated increases in corporate risks, our Board suspended the payment of dividends on our Common Stock. In 2014, our Board reinstated the payment of dividends on our Common Stock; however, the payment of dividends could be suspended again at any time.

Sales of a significant number of shares of our Common Stock in the public markets, or the perception of such sales, could depress the market price of our Common Stock.

Sales of a substantial number of shares of our Common Stock in the public markets and the availability of those shares for sale could adversely affect the market price of our Common Stock. In addition, future issuances of equity securities, including pursuant to outstanding options, could dilute the interests of our existing shareholders and could cause the market price of our Common Stock to decline. We may issue such additional equity or convertible securities to raise additional capital. Depending on the amount offered and the levels at which we offer the stock, issuances of common or preferred stock could be substantially dilutive to shareholders of our Common Stock. Moreover, to the extent that we issue restricted stock, phantom shares, stock appreciation rights, options or warrants to purchase our Common Stock in the future and those stock appreciation rights, options or warrants are exercised or as shares of the restricted stock vest, our shareholders may experience further dilution. Holders of our shares of Common Stock have no preemptive rights that entitle holders to purchase their pro rata share of any offering of shares of any class or series and, therefore, such sales or offerings could result in increased dilution to our shareholders. We cannot predict with certainty the effect that future sales of our Common Stock would have on the market price of our Common Stock.

ITEM 1B. UNRESOLVED STAFF COMMENTS

None.

ITEM 2. PROPERTIES

The Company's corporate headquarters is located at 310 First St. SE, Moultrie, Georgia 31768. The Company occupies approximately 6,300 square feet at this location plus an additional 37,248 square feet used for support services for banking operations, including credit, sales and operational support, as well as audit and loan review services. The Company also leases approximately 40,072 square feet in Jacksonville, Florida used for additional corporate support services. In addition to its corporate headquarters, Ameris operates 101 office or branch locations, with eight of those locations announced to be consolidated within the coming months. Of the 101 branch locations, 81 are owned and 20 are subject to either building or ground leases. Ameris also operates nine mortgage production offices, all of which are subject to building leases. At December 31, 2015, there were no significant encumbrances on the offices, equipment or other operational facilities owned by Ameris and the Bank.

ITEM 3. LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

From time to time, as a normal incident of the nature and kind of business in which the Company is engaged, various claims or charges are asserted against the Company or the Bank. In the ordinary course of business, the Company and the Bank are also subject to regulatory examinations, information gathering requests, inquiries and investigations. Other than ordinary routine litigation incidental to the Company's business, management believes based on its current knowledge and after consultation with legal counsel that there are no pending or threatened legal proceedings that will, individually or in the aggregate, have a material adverse effect on the consolidated results of operations or financial condition of the Company.

ITEM 4. MINE SAFETY DISCLOSURES

Not applicable.

PART II

ITEM 5. MARKET FOR REGISTRANT'S COMMON EQUITY, RELATED STOCKHOLDER MATTERS AND ISSUER PURCHASES OF EQUITY SECURITIES

Market Price of Common Stock

The Common Stock is listed on NASDAQ under the symbol "ABCB". The following table sets forth: (i) the high and low sales prices for the Common Stock as quoted on NASDAQ during 2015 and 2014; and (ii) the amount of quarterly dividends declared on the Common Stock during the periods indicated. The high and low sales prices reflect inter-dealer prices, without retail mark-up, mark-down or commission, and may not necessarily represent actual transactions.

<u>Quarter Ended 2015</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Dividend</u>
March 31	\$26.55	\$22.75	0.05
June 30	26.87	24.73	0.05
September 30	28.75	24.97	0.05
December 31	34.90	27.65	0.05
<u>Quarter Ended 2014</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Dividend</u>
March 31	\$24.00	\$19.86	-
June 30	23.90	19.73	0.05
September 30	24.04	21.00	0.05
December 31	26.48	21.95	0.05

Dividends

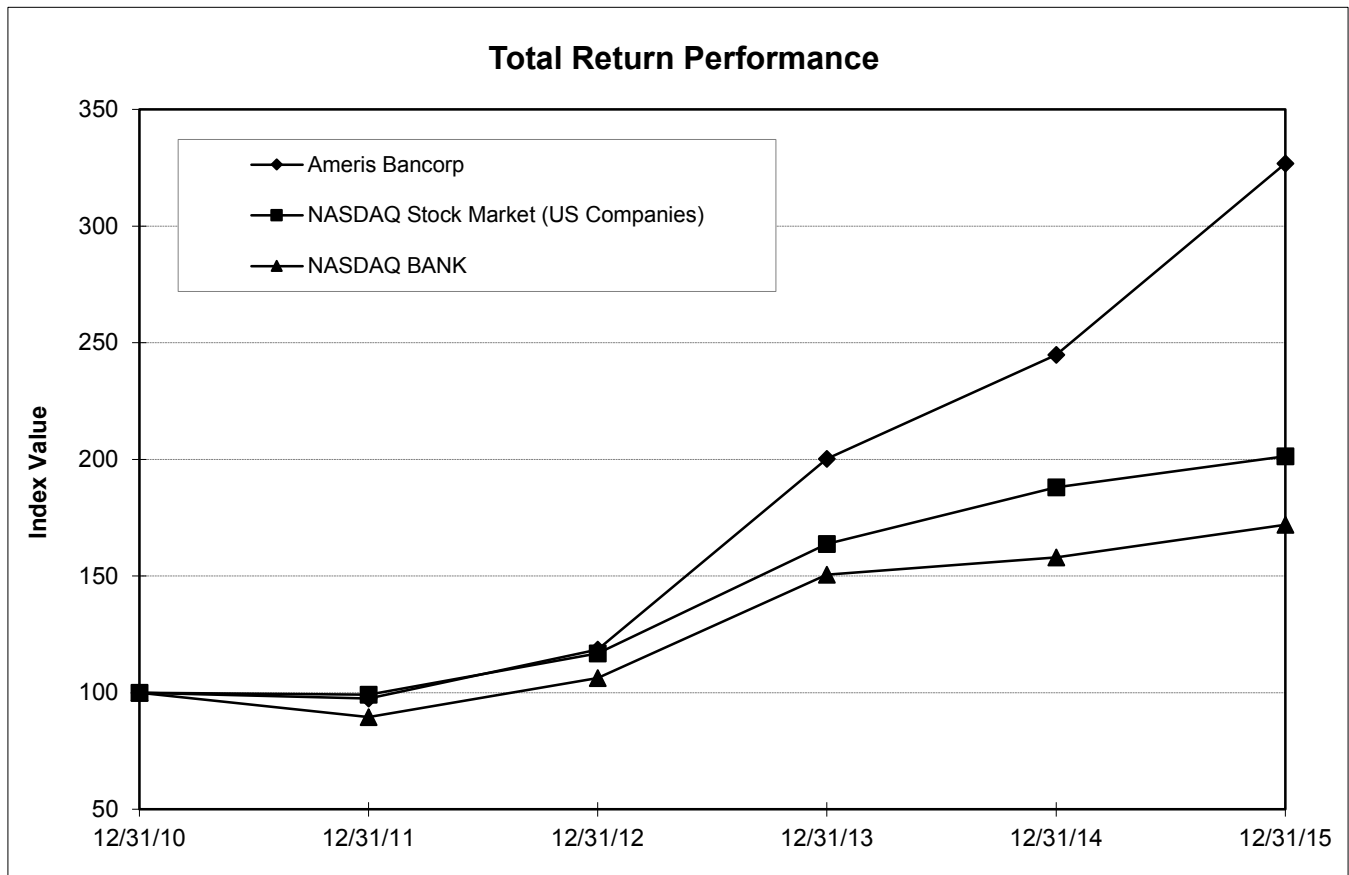
The amount of and nature of any dividends declared on our Common Stock in the future will be determined by our Board of Directors in its sole discretion. The Board reinstated a quarterly cash dividend of \$0.05 per share per quarter in June 2014. The Company is required to comply with the restrictions on the payment of dividends in respect of the Common Stock discussed in the section of Part I, Item 1 of this Annual Report captioned "Payment of Dividends and Other Restrictions."

Holder of Common Stock

As of February 18, 2016, there were approximately 2,132 holders of record of the Common Stock. The Company believes a portion of Common Stock outstanding is held either in nominee name or street name brokerage accounts; therefore, the Company is unable to determine the number of beneficial owners of the Common Stock.

Performance Graph

Set forth below is a line graph comparing the change in the cumulative total shareholder return on the Common Stock against the cumulative return of the NASDAQ Stock Market (U.S. Companies) index and the index of NASDAQ Bank Stocks for the five-year period commencing December 31, 2010, and ending December 31, 2015. This line graph assumes an investment of \$100 on December 31, 2010, and reinvestment of dividends and other distributions to shareholders.



Pursuant to the regulations of the SEC, this performance graph is not "soliciting material," is not deemed filed with the SEC and is not to be incorporated by reference in any filing of the Company under the Securities Act or the Exchange Act.

ITEM 6. SELECTED FINANCIAL DATA

The following table presents selected consolidated financial information for Ameris. The data set forth below is derived from the audited consolidated financial statements of Ameris. Acquisitions, including the FDIC-assisted transactions completed between 2009 and 2012, the acquisition of Prosperity in 2013, the acquisition of Coastal in 2014, the branch acquisition in 2015 and the acquisition of Merchants in 2015, significantly affected the comparability of selected financial data. Specifically, since the acquisitions were accounted for using the acquisition method of accounting, the assets of the acquired institutions were recorded at their fair values, the excess purchase price over the net fair value of the assets was recorded as goodwill and the results of operations for the business have been included in the Company's results since the respective dates these acquisitions were completed. Accordingly, the level of our assets and liabilities and our results of operations for these acquisitions have significantly affected the Company's financial position and results of operations. Discussion of these acquisitions can be found in the "Corporate Restructuring and Business Combinations" section of Part I, Item 1. of this Annual Report and in Note 3, "Business Combinations," and Note 4, "Assets Acquired in FDIC-Assisted Acquisitions," in the Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements. The selected financial data should be read in conjunction with, and is qualified in its entirety by, the Consolidated Financial Statements and the Notes thereto and Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations included elsewhere herein.

	Year Ended December 31,				
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
(Dollars in Thousands, Except Per Share Data)					
Selected Balance Sheet Data:					
Total assets	\$ 5,588,940	\$ 4,037,077	\$ 3,667,649	\$ 3,019,052	\$ 2,994,307
Loans, net of unearned income	2,406,877	1,889,881	1,618,454	1,450,635	1,332,086
Purchased, non-covered loans	771,554	674,239	448,753	-	-
Purchased loan pools	592,963	-	-	-	-
Covered loans	137,529	271,279	390,237	507,712	571,489
Investment securities available for sale	783,185	541,805	486,235	346,909	339,967
FDIC loss-share receivable, net of clawback	6,301	31,351	65,441	159,724	242,394
Total deposits	4,879,290	3,431,149	2,999,231	2,624,663	2,591,566
Stockholders' equity	514,759	366,028	316,699	279,017	293,770
Selected Average Balances:					
Total assets	\$ 4,804,245	\$ 3,731,281	\$ 2,848,529	\$ 2,971,960	\$ 2,965,799
Loans, net of unearned income	2,161,726	1,753,013	1,478,816	1,393,012	1,348,557
Purchased, non-covered loans	712,022	557,708	11,065	-	-
Purchased loan pools	201,689	-	-	-	-
Covered loans	206,774	339,417	440,923	553,657	570,719
Investment securities available for sale	731,165	508,383	332,413	369,734	338,736
Total deposits	4,126,885	3,200,622	2,487,901	2,150,729	2,247,163
Stockholders' equity	492,242	316,400	277,173	293,400	282,523
Selected Income Statement Data:					
Interest income	\$ 190,393	\$ 164,566	\$ 126,322	\$ 129,479	\$ 141,071
Interest expense	14,856	14,680	10,137	15,074	27,547
Net interest income	175,537	149,886	116,185	114,405	113,524
Provision for loan losses	5,264	5,648	11,486	31,089	32,729
Other income	85,586	62,836	46,549	57,874	52,807
Other expenses	199,115	150,869	121,945	119,470	101,953
Income before income taxes	56,744	56,205	29,303	21,720	31,649
Income tax expense	15,897	17,482	9,285	7,285	10,556
Net income	<u>\$ 40,847</u>	<u>\$ 38,723</u>	<u>\$ 20,018</u>	<u>\$ 14,435</u>	<u>\$ 21,093</u>
Preferred stock dividends	-	286	1,738	3,577	3,241
Net income available to common shareholders	<u>\$ 40,847</u>	<u>\$ 38,437</u>	<u>\$ 18,280</u>	<u>\$ 10,858</u>	<u>\$ 17,852</u>

	Year Ended December 31,				
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
(Dollars in Thousands, Except Per Share Data)					
Per Share Data:					
Net income – basic	\$1.29	\$1.48	\$0.76	\$0.46	\$0.76
Net income – diluted	1.27	1.46	0.75	0.46	0.76
Common book value	15.98	13.67	11.50	10.56	10.23
Common dividends – cash	0.20	0.15	-	-	-
Common dividends – stock	-	-	-	-	-
Profitability Ratios:					
Net income to average total assets	0.85%	1.08%	0.70%	0.49%	0.60%
Net income to average common stockholders' equity	8.37	12.40	8.06	5.99	7.21
Net interest margin	4.12	4.59	4.74	4.60	4.57
Efficiency ratio	76.25	70.92	74.94	69.35	61.30
Loan Quality Ratios:					
Net charge-offs to average loans*	0.22%	0.34%	0.75%	2.87%	2.21%
Allowance for loan losses to total loans *	0.85	1.12	1.38	1.63	2.64
Nonperforming assets to total loans and OREO**	1.60	3.35	3.49	5.28	8.76
Liquidity Ratios:					
Loans to total deposits	80.11%	82.64%	81.94%	74.61%	73.45%
Average loans to average earnings assets	75.96	80.22	78.08	77.83	76.72
Noninterest-bearing deposits to total deposits	27.26	24.46	22.29	19.46	15.26
Capital Adequacy Ratios:					
Stockholders' equity to total assets	9.21%	9.07%	8.63%	9.24%	9.81%
Common stock dividend payout ratio	15.76	10.37	-	-	-

* Excludes purchased non-covered and covered assets.

** Excludes covered assets.

ITEM 7. MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL CONDITION AND RESULTS OF OPERATIONS

OVERVIEW

During 2015, the Company reported net income available to common shareholders of approximately \$40.8 million, or \$1.27 per share, compared with \$38.4 million, or \$1.46 per share, in 2014. The Company's net income as a percentage of average assets for 2015 and 2014 was 0.85% and 1.08%, respectively, while the Company's net income as a percentage of average shareholders' equity was 8.37% and 12.40%, respectively.

Highlights of the Company's performance in 2015 include the following:

- The Company completed the acquisition of Merchants and 18 additional retail branches, increasing total assets by approximately \$1.14 billion, total loans by approximately \$195.5 million and total deposits by approximately \$1.05 billion. The Merchants acquisition added thirteen retail offices in the Gainesville and Ocala, Florida markets, and the branch acquisitions added eighteen branches in North Florida and South Georgia. The Company recorded \$14.7 million in additional goodwill and \$3.9 million in core deposit intangibles associated with the Merchants acquisition and \$11.2 million in additional goodwill and \$8.6 million in core deposit intangibles associated with the branch acquisition.
- The Company announced the execution of an agreement to acquire JAXB, the parent company of The Jacksonville Bank. The Jacksonville Bank currently operates eight banking locations, all of which are located within the Jacksonville, Florida MSA. The acquisition will further expand the Company's existing Southeastern footprint in the attractive Jacksonville market, where the Company will be the largest community bank by deposit market share after the acquisition. Upon completion of the transaction, the combined company will have approximately \$6.0 billion in assets, \$4.2 billion in loans and \$5.2 billion in deposits. The transaction is expected to close in March 2016.
- Non-accrual loans, excluding purchased loans, decreased approximately \$4.9 million, or 22.4%, to \$16.9 million during 2015. Legacy OREO (excluding purchased OREO and OREO sourced from purchased loans) decreased significantly from \$33.2 million at December 31, 2014 to \$16.1 million at December 31, 2015. Net charge-offs for 2015 declined to 0.22% of total legacy loans, compared with 0.34% for 2014.
- Tangible common equity to tangible assets increased slightly from 7.42% at December 31, 2014 to 7.44% at December 31, 2015. Tangible common book value per share increased 15.1% from \$10.99 at December 31, 2014 to \$12.65 at December 31, 2015.
- Net income from the Company's retail mortgage division increased 88.4% during 2015 to \$9.3 million.
- Net income from the Company's SBA division increased 24.7% during 2015 to \$2.8 million.
- The Company's net interest margin decreased to 4.12% in 2015, from 4.59% in 2014. Lower yields on most earning asset classes were offset by lower funding costs. Deposit costs, the Company's largest funding expense, continued to decline from 0.30% in 2014 to 0.23% in 2015, due to shifts in the deposit mix.

CRITICAL ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Ameris has established certain accounting and financial reporting policies to govern the application of accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America ("GAAP") in the preparation of our financial statements. Our significant accounting policies are described in Note 1 to the Consolidated Financial Statements. Certain accounting policies involve significant judgments and assumptions by management which have a material impact on the carrying value of certain assets and liabilities; management considers these accounting policies to be critical accounting policies. The judgments and assumptions used by management are based on historical experience and other factors which are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. Because of the nature of the judgments and assumptions made by management, actual results could differ from the judgments and estimates adopted by management which could have a material impact on the carrying values of assets and liabilities and the results of our operations. We believe the following accounting policies applied by Ameris represent critical accounting policies.

Allowance for Loan Losses

We believe the allowance for loan losses is a critical accounting policy that requires the most significant judgments and estimates used in the preparation of our consolidated financial statements. The allowance for loan losses represents management's estimate of probable incurred losses in the Company's loan portfolio. Calculation of the allowance for loan losses represents a critical accounting estimate due to the significant judgment, assumptions and estimates related to the amount and timing of estimated losses, consideration of subjective environmental factors and the amount and timing of cash flows related to impaired loans.

Management believes that the allowance for loan losses is adequate. While management uses available information to recognize losses on loans, future additions to the allowance for loan losses may be necessary based on changes in economic conditions. In addition, various regulatory agencies, as an integral part of their examination processes, periodically review the Company's allowance for loan losses. Such agencies may require the Company to recognize additions to the allowance for loan losses based on their judgments about information available to them at the time of their examination.

Considering current information and events regarding a borrower's ability to repay its obligations, management considers a loan to be impaired when the ultimate collectability of all amounts due, according to the contractual terms of the loan agreement, is in doubt. When a loan is considered to be impaired, the amount of impairment is measured based on the present value of expected future cash flows discounted at the loan's effective interest rate or if the loan is collateral-dependent, the fair value of the collateral is used to determine the amount of impairment. Impairment losses are included in the allowance for loan losses through a charge to the provision for losses on loans.

Subsequent recoveries are credited to the allowance for loan losses. Cash receipts for accruing loans are applied to principal and interest under the contractual terms of the loan agreement. Cash receipts on impaired loans for which the accrual of interest has been discontinued are applied first to principal and then to interest income.

Certain economic and interest rate factors could have a material impact on the determination of the allowance for loan losses. An improving economy could result in the expansion of businesses and creation of jobs which would positively affect our loan growth and improve our gross revenue stream. Conversely, certain factors could result from an expanding economy which could increase our credit costs and adversely impact our net earnings. A significant rapid rise in interest rates could create higher borrowing costs and shrinking corporate profits which could have a material impact on a borrower's ability to pay. We will continue to concentrate on maintaining a high quality loan portfolio through strict administration of our loan policy.

Another factor that we have considered in the determination of the allowance for loan losses is loan concentrations to individual borrowers or industries. At December 31, 2015, we did not have any individual loan that exceeded our in-house credit limit of \$20.0 million. We had three relationships consisting of 12 different non-covered loans that exceeded our \$20.0 million in-house credit limit. Total exposure resulting from these three relationships was \$80.1 million. Additional disclosure concerning the Company's largest loan relationships is provided in the "Balance Sheet Comparison" section below.

A substantial portion of our loan portfolio is in the commercial real estate and residential real estate sectors. Those loans are secured by real estate in our primary market areas. A substantial portion of OREO is located in those same markets. Therefore, the ultimate collectability of a substantial portion of our loan portfolio and the recoverability of a substantial portion of the carrying amount of OREO are susceptible to changes to market conditions in our primary market area.

Fair Value Accounting Estimates

GAAP requires the use of fair values in determining the carrying values of certain assets and liabilities, as well as for specific disclosures. The most significant include impaired loans, OREO, and the net assets acquired in business combinations. Certain of these assets do not have a readily available market to determine fair value and require an estimate based on specific parameters. When market prices are unavailable, we determine fair values utilizing estimates, which are constantly changing, including interest rates, duration, prepayment speeds and other specific conditions. In most cases, these specific parameters require a significant amount of judgment by management. At December 31, 2015, the percentage of the Company's assets measured at fair value was 17%. See Note 22, "Fair Value of Financial Instruments," in the Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements herein for additional disclosures regarding the fair value of our assets and liabilities.

When a loan is considered impaired, a specific valuation allowance is allocated, if necessary, so that the loan is reported net, at the present value of estimated future cash flows using the loan's existing rate or at the fair value of collateral if repayment is expected solely from the collateral. In addition, foreclosed assets are carried at the net realizable value, following foreclosure. The Company's impaired loans and foreclosed property are concentrated in markets and areas where the determination of fair value through market research (recent sales and/or qualified appraisals) is difficult. Accordingly, the determination of fair value in the current environment is difficult and more subjective than it would be in traditionally stable real estate environments. Although management believes its processes for determining the value of these assets are appropriate and allow Ameris to arrive at a fair value, the processes require management judgment and assumptions and the value of such assets at the time they are revalued or divested may be different from management's determination of fair value.

Business Combinations

Assets purchased and liabilities assumed in a business combination are recorded at their fair value. The fair value of a loan portfolio acquired in a business combination requires greater levels of management estimates and judgment than the remainder of purchased assets or assumed liabilities. On the date of acquisition, when the loans have evidence of credit deterioration since origination and it is probable at the date of acquisition that the Company will not collect all contractually required principal and interest payments, the difference between contractually required payments at acquisition and the cash flows expected to be collected at acquisition is referred to as the non-accretable difference. The Company must estimate expected cash flows at each reporting date. Subsequent decreases to the expected cash flows will generally result in a provision for loan losses. Subsequent increases in cash flows result in a reversal of the provision for loan losses to the extent of prior charges and adjusted accretable yield which will have a positive impact on interest income. In addition, purchased loans without evidence of credit deterioration are also handled under this method.

Income Taxes

GAAP requires the asset and liability approach for financial accounting and reporting for deferred income taxes. We use the asset and liability method of accounting for deferred income taxes and provide deferred income taxes for all significant income tax temporary differences. See Note 16, "Income Taxes," in the Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements for additional details.

As part of the process of preparing our consolidated financial statements we are required to estimate our income taxes in each of the jurisdictions in which we operate. This process involves estimating our actual current tax exposure together with assessing temporary differences resulting from differing treatment of items, such as gains on FDIC-assisted transactions and the provision for loan losses, for tax and financial reporting purposes. These differences result in deferred tax assets and liabilities that are included in our consolidated balance sheet.

We must also assess the likelihood that our deferred tax assets will be recovered from future taxable income, and to the extent we believe that recovery is not likely, we must establish a valuation allowance. Significant management judgment is required in determining our provision for income taxes, our deferred tax assets and liabilities and any valuation allowance recorded against our net deferred tax assets. To the extent we establish a valuation allowance or adjust this allowance in a period, we must include an expense within the tax provisions in the statement of income.

Long-Lived Assets, Including Intangibles

Intangible assets consist of goodwill and core deposit intangibles. Goodwill represents the excess purchase price over the fair value of net assets acquired in business acquisitions. Core deposit intangibles represent premiums paid for deposits acquired via acquisition and are being amortized over its estimated useful life, typically five to seven years.

NET INCOME/(LOSS) AND EARNINGS PER SHARE

The Company's net income available to common shareholders during 2015 was approximately \$40.8 million, or \$1.27 per diluted share, compared with \$38.4 million, or \$1.46 per diluted share, in 2014, and \$18.3 million, or \$0.75 per diluted share, in 2013.

For the fourth quarter of 2015, the Company recorded net income available to common shareholders of approximately \$14.1 million, or \$0.43 per diluted share, compared with \$10.6 million, or \$0.39 per diluted share, for the quarter ended December 31, 2014, and \$966,000, or \$0.04 per diluted share, for the quarter ended December 31, 2013.

EARNING ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Average earning assets were approximately \$4.32 billion in 2015, compared with approximately \$3.30 billion in 2014. The earning asset and interest-bearing liability mix is regularly monitored to maximize the net interest margin and, therefore, increase return on assets and shareholders' equity.

The following statistical information should be read in conjunction with the remainder of "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operation" and the Consolidated Financial Statements and related notes included elsewhere in this Annual Report and in the documents incorporated herein by reference.

The following tables set forth the amount of our interest income or interest expense for each category of interest-earning assets and interest-bearing liabilities and the average interest rate for total interest-earning assets and total interest-bearing liabilities, net interest spread and net interest margin on average interest-earning assets. Federally tax-exempt income is presented on a taxable-equivalent basis assuming a 35% federal tax rate.

	Year Ended December 31,								
	2015			2014			2013		
	Average Balance	Interest Income/Expense	Average Yield/Rate Paid	Average Balance	Interest Income/Expense	Average Yield/Rate Paid	Average Balance	Interest Income/Expense	Average Yield/Rate Paid
	(Dollars in Thousands)								
ASSETS									
Interest-earning assets:									
Mortgage loans held for sale	\$ 87,952	\$ 3,466	3.94%	\$ 71,231	\$ 2,593	3.64%	\$ 110,542	\$ 3,883	3.51%
Loans	2,161,726	103,206	4.77	1,753,013	87,727	5.00	1,478,816	80,005	5.41
Purchased non-covered loans	712,022	46,208	6.49	557,708	40,020	7.18	11,065	570	5.15
Purchased loan pools	201,689	6,481	3.21	-	-	-	-	-	-
Covered loans	206,774	14,128	6.83	339,417	21,355	6.29	440,923	33,587	7.62
Investment securities	731,165	18,657	2.55	508,383	14,281	2.81	332,413	9,041	2.72
Short-term assets	219,620	823	0.37	73,715	244	0.33	98,945	278	0.28
Total interest-earning assets	<u>4,320,948</u>	<u>192,969</u>	4.47	<u>3,303,467</u>	<u>166,220</u>	5.03	<u>2,472,704</u>	<u>127,364</u>	5.15
Noninterest-earning assets	<u>483,297</u>			<u>427,814</u>			<u>375,825</u>		
Total assets	<u>\$ 4,804,245</u>			<u>\$ 3,731,281</u>			<u>\$ 2,848,529</u>		
LIABILITIES AND STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY									
Interest-bearing liabilities:									
Savings and interest-bearing demand deposits	\$ 2,088,859	\$ 4,848	0.23%	\$ 1,680,328	\$ 4,435	0.26%	\$ 1,327,205	\$ 3,521	0.27%
Time deposits	810,344	4,905	0.61	768,420	5,054	0.66	671,083	4,878	0.73
Other borrowings	91,919	1,536	1.67	86,986	1,924	2.21	28,935	307	1.06
FHLB advances	8,444	31	0.37	46,986	140	0.30	2,400	63	2.63
Subordinated deferrable interest debentures	<u>67,962</u>	<u>3,536</u>	5.20	<u>60,298</u>	<u>3,127</u>	5.19	<u>43,276</u>	<u>1,368</u>	3.16
Total interest-bearing liabilities	<u>3,067,528</u>	<u>14,856</u>	0.48	<u>2,643,018</u>	<u>14,680</u>	0.56	<u>2,072,899</u>	<u>10,137</u>	0.49
Demand deposits	1,227,682			751,874			489,613		
Other liabilities	16,793			19,989			8,844		
Stockholders' equity	<u>492,242</u>			<u>316,400</u>			<u>277,173</u>		
Total liabilities and stockholders' equity	<u>\$ 4,804,425</u>			<u>\$ 3,731,281</u>			<u>\$ 2,848,529</u>		
Interest rate spread			<u>3.98%</u>			<u>4.47%</u>			<u>4.66%</u>
Net interest income		<u>\$ 178,113</u>			<u>\$ 151,540</u>			<u>\$ 117,227</u>	
Net interest margin			<u>4.12%</u>			<u>4.59%</u>			<u>4.74%</u>

RESULTS OF OPERATIONS

Net Interest Income

Net interest income represents the amount by which interest income on interest-earning assets exceeds interest expense incurred on interest-bearing liabilities. Net interest income is the largest component of our income and is affected by the interest rate environment and the volume and composition of interest-earning assets and interest-bearing liabilities. Our interest-earning assets include loans, investment securities, interest-bearing deposits in banks and federal funds sold. Our interest-bearing liabilities include deposits, securities sold under agreements to repurchase, other borrowings and subordinated debentures.

2015 compared with 2014. For the year ended December 31, 2015, interest income was \$190.4 million, an increase of \$25.8 million, or 15.7%, compared with the same period in 2014. Average earning assets increased \$1.02 billion, or 30.8%, to \$4.32 billion for the year ended December 31, 2015, compared with \$3.30 billion as of December 31, 2014. Yield on average earning assets on a taxable equivalent basis decreased during 2015 to 4.47%, compared with 5.03% for the year ended December 31, 2014. However, lower yields on most earning assets have been partially offset by lower funding costs.

Interest expense on deposits and other borrowings for the year ended December 31, 2015 was \$14.9 million, compared with \$14.7 million for the year ended December 31, 2014. The Company's funding mix continued to improve during 2015, leading to savings in cost of funds. During 2015, average noninterest-bearing accounts amounted to \$1.23 billion and comprised 29.2% of average total deposits, compared with \$751.9 million, or 23.5% of average total deposits, during 2014. Average balances of time deposits amounted to \$810.3 million and comprised 19.3% of average total deposits during 2015, compared with \$768.4 million, or 24.0% of average total deposits, during 2014.

On a taxable-equivalent basis, net interest income for 2015 was \$178.1 million, compared with \$151.5 million in 2014, an increase of \$26.6 million, or 17.5%. The Company's net interest margin, on a tax equivalent basis, decreased to 4.12% for the year ended December 31, 2015, compared with 4.59% for the year ended December 31, 2014.

2014 compared with 2013. For the year ended December 31, 2014, interest income was \$164.6 million, an increase of \$38.2 million, or 30.3%, compared with the same period in 2013. Average earning assets increased \$830.8 million, or 33.6%, to \$3.30 billion for the year ended December 31, 2014, compared with \$2.47 billion as of December 31, 2013. Yield on average earning assets on a taxable equivalent basis decreased during 2014 to 5.03%, compared with 5.15% for the year ended December 31, 2013.

Interest expense on deposits and other borrowings for the year ended December 31, 2014 was \$14.7 million, compared with \$10.1 million for the year ended December 31, 2013. The Company's funding mix continued to improve during 2014, leading to savings in cost of funds. During 2014, average noninterest-bearing accounts amounted to \$751.9 million and comprised 23.5% of average total deposits, compared with \$489.6 million, or 19.7% of average total deposits, during 2013. Average balances of time deposits amounted to \$768.4 million and comprised 24.0% of average total deposits during 2014, compared with \$671.1 million, or 27.0% of average total deposits, during 2013.

On a taxable-equivalent basis, net interest income for 2014 was \$151.5 million, compared with \$117.2 million in 2013, an increase of \$34.3 million, or 29.3%. The Company's net interest margin, on a tax equivalent basis, decreased to 4.59% for the year ended December 31, 2014, compared with 4.74% for the year ended December 31, 2013.

The summary of changes in interest income and interest expense on a fully taxable equivalent basis resulting from changes in volume and changes in rates for each category of earning assets and interest-bearing liabilities for the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014 are shown in the following table:

	2015 vs. 2014			2014 vs. 2013		
	Increase	Changes Due To		Increase	Changes Due to	
	(Decrease)	Rate	Volume	(Decrease)	Rate	Volume
	(Dollars in Thousands)					
Increase (decrease) in:						
Income from earning assets:						
Interest on mortgage loans held for sale	\$ 873	\$ 264	\$ 609	\$ (1,290)	\$ 91	\$(1,381)
Interest and fees on loans	15,479	(4,974)	20,453	7,722	(7,112)	14,834
Interest on purchased non-covered loans	6,188	(4,885)	11,073	39,450	11,290	28,160
Interest on purchased loan pools	6,481	-	6,481	-	-	-
Interest on covered loans	(7,227)	1,118	(8,345)	(12,232)	(4,500)	(7,732)
Interest on securities	4,376	(1,882)	6,258	5,240	454	4,786
Short-term assets	579	96	483	(34)	37	(71)
Total interest income	<u>26,749</u>	<u>(10,263)</u>	<u>37,012</u>	<u>38,856</u>	<u>260</u>	<u>38,596</u>
Expense from interest-bearing liabilities:						
Interest on savings and interest-bearing demand deposits	413	(665)	1,078	914	(23)	937
Interest on time deposits	(149)	(425)	276	176	(532)	708
Interest on other borrowings	(388)	(497)	109	1,617	1,001	616
Interest on FHLB advances	(109)	6	(115)	77	(1,093)	1,170
Interest on trust preferred securities	409	12	397	1,759	1,221	538
Total interest expense	<u>176</u>	<u>(1,569)</u>	<u>1,745</u>	<u>4,543</u>	<u>574</u>	<u>3,969</u>
Net interest income	<u>\$ 26,573</u>	<u>\$ (8,694)</u>	<u>\$35,267</u>	<u>\$ 34,313</u>	<u>\$ (314)</u>	<u>\$34,627</u>

Provision for Loan Losses

The allowance for loan losses is a reserve established through charges to earnings in the form of a provision for loan losses. The provision for loan losses is based on management's evaluation of the size and composition of the loan portfolio, the level of non-performing and past due loans, historical trends of charged-off loans and recoveries, prevailing economic conditions and other factors management deems appropriate. As these factors change, the level of loan loss provision may change.

The Company's provision for loan losses during 2015 amounted to \$5.3 million, compared with \$5.6 million for 2014 and \$11.5 million in 2013. Net charge-offs in 2015 were 0.22% of average loans, excluding purchased loans and the loans covered by the FDIC-loss-sharing agreements, compared with 0.34% in 2014 and 0.69% in 2013.

At December 31, 2015, non-performing assets, excluding assets covered by the FDIC-loss-sharing agreements, amounted to \$60.7 million, or 1.09% of total assets, compared with 2.17% at December 31, 2014. Legacy non-performing assets totaled \$33.0 million and acquired, non-covered non-performing assets totaled \$27.7 million at December 31, 2015. Legacy other real estate was approximately \$16.1 million as of December 31, 2015, reflecting a 51.3% decrease from the \$33.2 million reported at December 31, 2014. Purchased, non-covered other real estate was \$14.3 million at December 31, 2015, compared with \$15.6 million at December 31, 2014. The Company's allowance for loan losses at December 31, 2015 was \$21.1 million, or 0.85% of loans, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, compared with \$21.2 million, or 1.12%, and \$22.4 million, or 1.38%, at December 31, 2014 and 2013, respectively.

Noninterest Income

Following is a comparison of noninterest income for 2015, 2014 and 2013.

	Years Ended December 31,		
	2015	2014	2013
	(Dollars in Thousands)		
Service charges on deposit accounts	\$ 34,465	\$ 24,614	\$ 19,545
Mortgage banking activities	36,800	25,986	19,128
Other service charges, commissions and fees	3,754	2,647	2,151
Gain on sales of securities	137	138	171
Gain on sale of SBA loans	4,522	3,896	1,500
Other income	5,908	5,555	4,054
	<u>\$ 85,586</u>	<u>\$ 62,836</u>	<u>\$ 46,549</u>

2015 compared with 2014. Total noninterest income in 2015 was \$85.6 million, compared with \$62.8 million in 2014, an increase of \$22.8 million. This increase is due to a \$10.8 million increase in mortgage banking activity, a \$9.9 million increase in service charges on deposit accounts, a \$1.1 million increase in other service charges, a \$626,000 increase in gain on the sale of SBA loans and a \$353,000 increase in other income.

Income from mortgage banking activities continued to increase during 2015, from \$26.0 million in 2014 to \$36.8 million in 2015, as the Company's mortgage division reached a mature stage with a team of long-tenured mortgage bankers producing strong results.

Service charges on deposit accounts increased \$9.9 million, or 40.0%, in 2015 as a result of acquisition activity and successful efforts on commercial deposit accounts. Other service charges increased \$1.1 million, or 41.8%, in 2015 due to acquisitions and increased sales efforts. Since 2011, the Company has devoted significant resources to both treasury deposit products and treasury sales professionals, which contributed significantly to the Company's growth in non-interest bearing deposits.

Gains on sales of SBA loans increased \$626,000 to \$4.5 million during 2015, as the Company continued its efforts to build an SBA division.

2014 compared with 2013. Total noninterest income in 2014 was \$62.8 million, compared with \$46.5 million in 2013, an increase of \$16.3 million. The majority of this increase relates to a \$6.9 million increase in mortgage banking activity, a \$5.1 million increase in service charges on deposit accounts, a \$3.9 million increase in other income, and a \$496,000 increase in other service charges.

Income from mortgage banking activities increased substantially during 2014, from \$19.1 million in 2013 to \$26.0 million in 2014, as the Company's mortgage division continued its growth.

Other income increased \$3.9 million, or 70.2%, from \$5.6 million in 2013 to \$9.5 million in 2014. The Company's recent efforts to build an SBA division resulted in significant gains in revenue and net income. During 2014, the Company recorded \$3.9 million of gains on sales of SBA loans and \$1.0 million of SBA servicing fee income, compared with gains on sales of SBA loans of \$1.5 million and SBA servicing fee income of \$611,000 in 2013.

Service charges on deposit accounts increased 25.9% in 2014, also as a result of acquisition activity and successful efforts on commercial deposit accounts.

Noninterest Expense

Following is a comparison of noninterest expense for 2015, 2014 and 2013.

	Years Ended December 31,		
	2015	2014	2013
	(Dollars in Thousands)		
Salaries and employee benefits	\$ 94,003	\$ 73,878	\$ 56,670
Equipment and occupancy	21,195	17,521	12,286
Amortization of intangible assets	3,741	2,330	1,414
Data processing and communication costs	19,849	15,551	11,539
Advertising and public relations	3,312	2,869	1,620
Postage & delivery	1,810	1,392	1,017
Printing & supplies	2,554	1,331	962
Legal fees	942	743	615
Other professional fees	2,506	2,349	1,526
Directors fees	1,203	810	722
FDIC assessments	3,475	2,972	2,323
Acquisition expenses	7,980	3,940	4,350
OREO and problem loan expenses	17,707	13,506	15,486
Other expense	18,838	11,677	11,415
	<u>\$199,115</u>	<u>\$150,869</u>	<u>\$121,945</u>

2015 compared with 2014. Operating expenses increased from \$150.9 million in 2014 to \$199.1 million in 2015. The primary drivers of the increase in operating expenses are the increased number of branch locations and continued growth and expansion in the Company's mortgage and SBA divisions. Salaries and employee benefits increased 27.2% from \$73.9 million in 2014 to \$94.0 million in 2015. Equipment and occupancy expense increased 21.0% from \$17.5 million in 2014 to \$21.2 million in 2015. Data processing and telecommunications expense increased during 2015 to \$19.8 million, an increase of 27.6% compared with the \$15.6 million reported for 2014. The majority of these expense increases are attributable to the additional branches acquired during 2014 and 2015. Postage and delivery, printing and supplies, legal fees and other professional fees all increased during 2015 to support the larger operations of the Company.

Acquisition expenses of \$8.0 million in 2015 relate to the Merchants and branch acquisitions, compared with the \$3.9 million recorded in 2014 related to the Coastal acquisition. Problem loan and OREO expenses increased \$4.2 million in 2015. During the second quarter of 2015, the Company recorded \$11.2 million of pre-tax OREO write-downs and other credit resolution-related expenses related to an aggressive write-down on remaining non-performing assets in order to expedite their liquidation. Excluding acquisition and credit-related expenses, total operating expenses were \$173.4 million for the year ended December 31, 2015, compared with \$133.4 million for 2014. Expressed as a percentage of average assets, total operating expense net of credit-related and acquisition costs was 3.61% in 2015, a slight increase from 3.58% reported for 2014.

2014 compared with 2013. Operating expenses increased from \$121.9 million in 2013 to \$150.9 million in 2014. The primary drivers of the increase in operating expenses are the increased number of branch locations and continued growth and expansion in the Company's mortgage and SBA divisions. Salaries and employee benefits increased 30.4% from \$56.7 million in 2013 to \$73.9 million in 2014. Equipment and occupancy expense increased 42.6% from \$12.3 million in 2013 to \$17.5 million in 2014. Data processing and telecommunications expense increased during 2014 to \$15.6 million, an increase of 34.8% compared with the \$11.5 million reported for 2013. Advertising and public relations increased \$1.2 million during 2014, as the Company incurred these costs to support various revenue and growth strategies throughout the year. Postage and delivery, printing and supplies, legal fees and other professional fees all increased during 2014 to support the Company's growth.

Acquisition expenses of \$3.9 million in 2014 relate to the Coastal acquisition, compared with the \$4.4 million recorded in 2013 related to the Prosperity acquisition. Problem loan and OREO expenses decreased \$2.0 million in 2014, as the level of OREO and problem loans declined and general economic conditions improved. Excluding acquisition and credit-related expenses, total operating expenses were \$133.4 million for the year ended December 31, 2014, compared with \$102.1 million for 2013. Expressed as a percentage of average assets, total operating expense net of credit-related and non-recurring acquisition costs in 2014 was 3.58%, a slight increase from 3.47% reported for 2013.

Income Taxes

Federal income tax expense is influenced by the amount of taxable income, the amount of tax-exempt income and the amount of non-deductible expenses. For the year ended December 31, 2015, the Company recorded income tax expense of approximately \$15.9 million, compared with \$17.5 million recorded in 2014 and \$9.3 million recorded in 2013. The Company's effective tax rate was 28%, 31% and 32% for the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, respectively.

BALANCE SHEET COMPARISON

LOANS

Management believes that our loan portfolio is adequately diversified. The loan portfolio contains no foreign loans or significant concentrations in any one industry. As of December 31, 2015, approximately 79.8% of our legacy loan portfolio was secured by real estate. The amount of loans outstanding, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, at the indicated dates is shown in the following table according to type of loans.

	December 31,				
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
(Dollars in Thousands)					
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 449,623	\$ 319,654	\$ 244,373	\$ 174,217	\$ 142,960
Real estate – construction & development	244,693	161,507	146,371	114,199	130,270
Real estate – commercial & farmland	1,104,991	907,524	808,323	732,322	672,765
Real estate – residential	570,430	456,106	351,886	346,480	330,727
Consumer installment loans	31,125	30,782	34,249	40,178	37,296
Other	6,015	14,308	33,252	43,239	18,068
	<u>2,406,877</u>	<u>1,889,881</u>	<u>1,618,454</u>	<u>1,450,635</u>	<u>1,332,086</u>
Less allowance for loan losses	20,481	21,157	22,377	23,593	35,156
Loans, net	<u>\$ 2,386,396</u>	<u>\$ 1,868,724</u>	<u>\$ 1,596,077</u>	<u>\$ 1,427,042</u>	<u>\$ 1,296,930</u>

The following table provides additional disclosure on the various loan types comprising the subgroup “Real estate – commercial & farmland” at December 31, 2015 (in thousands):

	Outstanding Balance	Average Maturity (Months)	Average Rate	% non-accrual
Owner-Occupied	\$ 368,842	48	5.14%	0.58%
Farmland	158,747	30	5.29%	1.96%
Apartments	79,123	52	4.80%	-
Hotels / Motels	37,170	52	5.14%	-
Auto Dealers	1,564	35	4.65%	-
Offices / Office Buildings	116,403	54	4.99%	-
Strip Centers (Anchored & Non-Anchored)	105,080	47	4.63%	-
Convenience Stores	9,311	32	4.98%	7.70%
Retail Properties	123,536	58	4.98%	0.49%
Warehouse Properties	75,120	54	5.01%	-
All Other	30,095	37	5.63%	1.49%
	<u>\$1,104,991</u>	44	5.15%	0.64%

The Company seeks to diversify its loan portfolio across its geographic footprint and in various loan types. Also, the Company's stated in-house legal lending limit for a single loan is \$20.0 million, which would normally prevent a concentration with a single loan project. Certain lending relationships may contain more than one loan and, consequently, exceed the in-house lending limit. The Company regularly monitors its largest loan relationships to avoid a concentration with a single borrower. The largest 25 loan relationships are summarized below by type and compared to the Bank's loan portfolio taken as a whole (in thousands):

	<u>Balance</u>	<u>Average Rate</u>	<u>Average Maturity (months)</u>	<u>% unsecured</u>	<u>% in non-accrual status</u>
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 141,524	3.13%	95	31.8%	-
Real estate – construction & development	29,190	4.03%	45	-	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	118,023	4.18%	68	-	-
Real estate – residential	23,972	4.01%	45	-	-
Total	<u>\$ 312,709</u>	3.87%	70	14.4%	-
Ameris Bank Loan Portfolio	<u>\$2,406,877</u>	6.04%	40	3.6%	0.70%

Total legacy loans, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, as of December 31, 2015, are shown in the following table according to their contractual maturity:

	<u>Contractual Maturity in:</u>			
	<u>One Year or Less</u>	<u>Over One Year through Five Years</u>	<u>Over Five Years</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>(Dollars in Thousands)</u>			
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 108,619	\$ 119,386	\$ 221,618	\$ 449,623
Real estate – construction & development	83,653	108,617	52,423	244,693
Real estate – commercial & farmland	158,602	578,847	367,542	1,104,991
Real estate – residential	157,401	189,461	223,568	570,430
Consumer installment loans	5,833	24,614	678	31,125
Other	6,015	-	-	6,015
	<u>\$ 520,123</u>	<u>\$ 1,020,925</u>	<u>\$ 865,829</u>	<u>\$ 2,406,877</u>

The following table summarizes loans at December 31, 2015, with maturity dates after one year which (i) have predetermined interest rates and (ii) have floating or adjustable interest rates.

	<u>(Dollars in Thousands)</u>
Predetermined interest rates	\$ 1,419,995
Floating or adjustable interest rates	466,759
	<u>\$ 1,886,754</u>

Purchased Non-Covered Assets

Loans that were acquired in transactions and are not covered by the loss-sharing agreements with the FDIC (“purchased non-covered loans”) totaled \$771.6 million and \$674.2 million at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively. OREO that was acquired in transactions and is not covered by the loss-sharing agreements with the FDIC totaled \$14.3 million and \$15.6 million at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively. Purchased non-covered assets include assets that were acquired in FDIC-assisted transactions but that are no longer covered by the loss-sharing agreements due to the expiration of such agreements.

The Bank initially recorded the loans at their fair values, taking into consideration certain credit quality and interest rate risk. The Company believes its estimation of credit risk and its adjustments to the carrying balances of the acquired loans is adequate. If the Company determines that a loan or group of loans has deteriorated from its initial assessment of fair value, the identified loss will be charged off and provision expense is recorded for that difference. During the year ended December 31, 2015, the Company recorded a net provision for loan loss credit of \$237,000 due to recoveries received on previously charged off purchased non-covered loans. During the year ended December 31, 2014, the Company recorded provision for loan loss expense of \$84,000 to account for losses where there was a decrease in cash flows from the initial estimates on purchased non-covered loans. If the Company determines that a loan or group of loans has improved from its initial assessment of fair value, then the increase in cash flows over those expected at the acquisition date is recognized as interest income prospectively.

The amount of purchased, non-covered loans outstanding, at the indicated dates, is shown in the following table according to type of loan.

	December 31,				
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
(Dollars in Thousands)					
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 45,462	\$ 38,041	\$ 32,141	\$ -	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	72,080	58,362	31,176	-	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	390,755	306,706	179,898	-	-
Real estate – residential	258,153	266,342	200,851	-	-
Consumer installment loans	5,104	4,788	4,687	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total purchased, non-covered loans	<u>\$ 771,554</u>	<u>\$ 674,239</u>	<u>\$ 448,753</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

Purchased loans as of December 31, 2015, are shown below according to their contractual maturity:

	Contractual Maturity in:			
	One Year or Less	Over One Year through Five Years	Over Five Years	Total
(Dollars in Thousands)				
Purchased, non-covered loans	\$ 111,334	\$ 222,771	\$437,449	\$ 771,554
Covered loans	41,035	50,899	45,595	137,529
Total Purchased loans	<u>\$ 152,369</u>	<u>\$ 273,670</u>	<u>\$483,044</u>	<u>\$ 909,083</u>

Purchased Loan Pools

Purchased loan pools are defined as groups of loans that were not acquired in bank acquisitions or FDIC-assisted transactions. As of December 31, 2015, purchased loan pools totaled \$593.0 million and consisted of whole-loan, adjustable rate residential mortgages on properties outside the Company's markets, with principal balances totaling \$580.7 million and \$12.3 million of purchase premium paid at acquisition. The Company has allocated approximately \$581,000 of the allowance for loan losses to the purchased loan pools. The Company did not have any purchased loan pools prior to 2015.

Assets Covered by Loss-Sharing Agreements with the FDIC

Loans that were acquired in FDIC-assisted transactions that are covered by the loss-sharing agreements with the FDIC ("covered loans") totaling \$137.5 million and \$271.3 million at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively, are not included in the preceding tables. OREO that is covered by the loss-sharing agreements with the FDIC totaled \$5.0 million and \$19.9 million at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively. The loss-sharing agreements are subject to the servicing procedures as specified in the agreements with the FDIC. The expected reimbursements under the loss-sharing agreements were recorded as an indemnification asset at their estimated fair value at the respective acquisition dates. The net FDIC loss-share receivable reported at December 31, 2015 and 2014 was \$6.3 million and \$31.4 million, respectively.

The Company recorded the loans at their fair values, taking into consideration certain credit quality and interest rate risk. If the Company determines that a loan or group of loans has deteriorated from its initial assessment of fair value, the identified loss is charged off and a provision for loan loss is recorded. For the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, the Company recorded approximately \$751,000, \$843,000 and \$1.5 million, respectively, of provision for loan losses to account for decreases in estimated cash flows on loans acquired in FDIC-assisted transactions. If the Company determines that a loan or group of loans has improved from its initial assessment of fair value, the increase in cash flows over those expected at the acquisition date are recognized as interest income prospectively. Covered loans are shown below according to loan type as of the end of the years shown (in thousands):

	December 31,				
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
(Dollars in Thousands)					
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 5,546	\$ 21,467	\$ 26,550	\$ 32,606	\$ 41,867
Real estate – construction & development	7,612	23,447	43,179	70,184	77,077
Real estate – commercial & farmland	71,226	147,627	224,451	278,506	321,257
Real estate – residential	53,038	78,520	95,173	125,056	127,644
Consumer installment loans	107	218	884	1,360	3,644
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total covered loans	<u>\$ 137,529</u>	<u>\$ 271,279</u>	<u>\$ 390,237</u>	<u>\$ 507,712</u>	<u>\$ 571,489</u>

ALLOWANCE AND PROVISION FOR LOAN LOSSES

The allowance for loan losses represents a reserve for probable incurred losses in the loan portfolio. The adequacy of the allowance for loan losses is evaluated periodically based on a review of all significant loans, with a particular emphasis on non-accruing, past due and other loans that management believes might be potentially impaired or warrant additional attention. We segregate our loan portfolio by type of loan and utilize this segregation in evaluating exposure to risks within the portfolio. In addition, based on internal reviews and external reviews performed by independent loan reviewers and regulatory authorities, we further segregate our loan portfolio by loan grades based on an assessment of risk for a particular loan or group of loans. Certain reviewed loans are assigned specific allowances when a review of relevant data determines that a general allocation is not sufficient or when the review affords management the opportunity to fine tune the amount of exposure in a given credit. In establishing allowances, management considers historical loan loss experience but adjusts this data with a significant emphasis on data such as current loan quality trends, current economic conditions and other factors in the markets where the Bank operates. Factors considered include, among others, current valuations of real estate in our markets, unemployment rates, the effect of weather conditions on agricultural related entities and other significant local economic events, such as major plant closings.

We have developed a methodology for determining the adequacy of the allowance for loan losses which is monitored by the Company's Chief Credit Officer. Procedures provide for the assignment of a risk rating for every loan included in our total loan portfolio, with the exception of warehouse lines of credit and overdraft protection loans which are treated as pools for risk rating purposes. The risk rating schedule provides nine ratings of which five ratings are classified as pass ratings and four ratings are classified as criticized ratings. Each risk rating is assigned a percent factor to be applied to the loan balance to determine the adequate amount of allowance. Many of the larger loans require an annual review by an independent loan officer and are often reviewed by independent third parties. As a result of these loan reviews, certain loans may be assigned specific allowance allocations. Other loans that surface as problem loans may also be assigned specific allowance allocations. Assigned risk ratings can be adjusted based on the number of days past due. The calculation of the allowance for loan losses, including underlying data and assumptions, is reviewed regularly by the independent internal loan review department.

The primary contributor to the allowance for loan losses is historical losses by loan type. The Company's look-back period for historical losses is 16 quarters. Current period losses are substantially lower than those incurred four years ago, which has reduced the need in the allowance for loan losses, as a percentage of loans, at December 31, 2015, as compared to prior periods. The Company's trends for most of the qualitative factors currently utilized in the allowance for loan losses are positive compared to prior periods, which also contributes to a lower current need in the allowance for loan losses. Additionally, approximately 70% of the Company's loan growth during 2015 consisted of municipal loans, residential mortgages and purchased residential loan pools, each of which presents a lower risk of default than other loan types, such as acquisition, construction and development or investor commercial real estate loans. The growth in lower-risk loans during 2015, combined with the improved historical loss rates and qualitative factors, are the primary reasons the allowance for loan losses as a percentage of loans decreased during the year.

The following table sets forth the breakdown of the allowance for loan losses by loan category for the periods indicated. Management believes the allowance can be allocated only on an approximate basis. The allocation of the allowance to each category is not necessarily indicative of future losses and does not restrict the use of the allowance to absorb losses in any other category.

	At December 31,									
	2015		2014		2013		2012		2011	
	Amount	% of Loans to Total Loans	Amount	% of Loans to Total Loans	Amount	% of Loans to Total Loans	Amount	% of Loans to Total Loans	Amount	% of Loans to Total Loans
Commercial, financial, and agricultural	\$ 1,144	19%	\$ 2,004	17%	\$ 1,823	15%	\$ 2,439	12%	\$ 2,918	11%
R/E Commercial & Farmland	7,994	46	8,823	48	8,393	50	9,157	50	14,226	50
R/E Construction & Development	5,009	10	5,030	9	5,538	9	5,343	8	9,438	10
Total Commercial	<u>14,147</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>15,857</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>15,754</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>16,939</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>26,582</u>	<u>71</u>
R/E Residential	4,760	24	4,129	24	6,034	22	5,898	24	8,128	25
Consumer Installment	1,574	1	1,171	2	589	4	756	6	446	4
Purchased loan pools	581	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<u>\$ 21,062</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>\$ 21,157</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>\$ 22,377</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>\$ 23,593</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>\$ 35,156</u>	<u>100%</u>

The following table presents an analysis of our loan loss experience, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, for the periods indicated:

	December 31,				
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
	(Dollars in Thousands)				
Average amount of non-purchased loans outstanding	<u>\$ 2,161,726</u>	<u>\$ 1,753,013</u>	<u>\$ 1,478,816</u>	<u>\$ 1,393,012</u>	<u>\$ 1,348,557</u>
Balance of allowance for loan losses at beginning of period	<u>\$ 21,157</u>	<u>\$ 22,377</u>	<u>\$ 23,593</u>	<u>\$ 35,156</u>	<u>\$ 34,576</u>
Charge-offs:					
Commercial real estate, financial and agricultural	(4,427)	(5,447)	(7,350)	(31,382)	(25,475)
Residential real estate	(1,587)	(1,707)	(5,215)	(8,722)	(5,399)
Consumer Installment	(410)	(471)	(719)	(1,059)	(749)
Recoveries:					
Commercial real estate, financial and agricultural	1,291	944	935	679	1,593
Residential real estate	151	254	888	225	146
Consumer Installment	137	486	298	245	123
Net charge-offs	<u>(4,845)</u>	<u>(5,941)</u>	<u>(11,163)</u>	<u>(40,014)</u>	<u>(29,761)</u>
Additions to allowance charged to operating expenses	<u>4,750</u>	<u>4,721</u>	<u>9,947</u>	<u>28,451</u>	<u>30,341</u>
Balance of allowance for loan losses at end of period	<u>\$ 21,062</u>	<u>\$ 21,157</u>	<u>\$ 22,377</u>	<u>\$ 23,593</u>	<u>\$ 35,156</u>
Ratio of net loan charge-offs to average non-purchased loans	<u>0.22%</u>	<u>0.34%</u>	<u>0.75%</u>	<u>2.87%</u>	<u>2.21%</u>

NONPERFORMING LOANS

A loan is placed on non-accrual status when, in management's judgment, the collection of the interest income appears doubtful. Interest receivable that has been accrued in prior years and is subsequently determined to have doubtful collectability is charged to the allowance for loan losses. Interest on loans that are classified as non-accrual is recognized when received. Past due loans are placed on non-accrual status when principal or interest is past due 90 days or more. In some cases, where borrowers are experiencing financial difficulties, loans may be restructured to provide terms significantly different from the original contractual terms. The following table presents an analysis of loans accounted for on a non-accrual basis, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans.

	December 31,				
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
(Dollars in Thousands)					
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 1,302	\$ 1,672	\$ 4,103	\$ 4,138	\$ 3,987
Real estate – construction & development	1,812	3,774	3,971	9,281	15,020
Real estate – commercial & farmland	7,019	8,141	8,566	11,962	35,385
Real estate – residential	6,278	7,663	12,152	12,595	15,498
Consumer installment loans	449	478	411	909	933
Total	\$ 16,860	\$ 21,728	\$ 29,203	\$ 38,885	\$70,823
Loans contractually past due ninety days or more as to interest or principal payments and still accruing	-	1	-	-	-

The following table presents an analysis of purchased, non-covered loans accounted for on a non-accrual basis.

	December 31,				
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
(Dollars in Thousands)					
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 1,064	\$ 175	\$ 11	\$ -	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	1,106	1,119	325	-	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	4,920	10,242	1,653	-	-
Real estate – residential	6,168	6,644	4,658	-	-
Consumer installment loans	72	69	12	-	-
Total	\$ 13,330	\$ 18,249	\$ 6,659	\$ -	\$ -

The following table presents an analysis of covered loans accounted for on a non-accrual basis.

	December 31,				
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
(Dollars in Thousands)					
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 2,803	\$ 8,541	\$ 7,257	\$ 10,765	\$11,952
Real estate – construction & development	1,701	7,601	14,781	20,027	30,977
Real estate – commercial & farmland	5,034	12,584	33,495	55,946	75,458
Real estate – residential	3,663	6,595	13,278	28,672	41,139
Consumer installment loans	37	91	341	302	473
Total	\$ 13,238	\$ 35,412	\$ 69,152	\$115,712	\$159,999

Troubled Debt Restructurings

The restructuring of a loan is considered a “troubled debt restructuring” if both (i) the borrower is experiencing financial difficulties and (ii) the Company has granted a concession.

As of December 31, 2015 and 2014, the Company had a balance of \$16.4 million and \$15.3 million, respectively, in troubled debt restructurings, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans. The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings by loan class, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, classified separately as accrual and non-accrual at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<i>As of December 31, 2015</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	4	\$ 240	10	\$ 110
Real estate – construction & development	11	792	3	63
Real estate – commercial & farmland	16	5,766	3	596
Real estate – residential	51	7,574	20	1,123
Consumer installment	12	46	23	94
Total	94	\$ 14,418	59	\$ 1,986

<i>As of December 31, 2014</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	6	\$ 290	2	\$ 13
Real estate – construction & development	9	679	5	228
Real estate – commercial & farmland	19	6,477	3	724
Real estate – residential	47	5,258	11	1,485
Consumer installment	11	55	11	73
Total	92	\$ 12,759	32	\$ 2,523

The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings by loan class, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, classified separately as those currently paying under restructured terms and those that have defaulted (defined as 30 days past due) under restructured terms at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<i>As of December 31, 2015</i>	Loans Currently Paying Under Restructured Terms		Loans that have Defaulted Under Restructured Terms	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	11	\$ 314	3	\$ 37
Real estate – construction & development	10	771	4	83
Real estate – commercial & farmland	16	5,739	3	624
Real estate – residential	49	7,086	22	1,610
Consumer installment	20	75	15	65
Total	106	\$ 13,985	47	\$ 2,419

<i>As of December 31, 2014</i>	Loans Currently Paying Under Restructured Terms		Loans that have Defaulted Under Restructured Terms	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	7	\$ 67	1	\$ 236
Real estate – construction & development	9	679	5	228
Real estate – commercial & farmland	19	6,477	3	724
Real estate – residential	45	5,036	13	1,707
Consumer installment	14	67	8	61
Total	94	\$ 12,326	30	\$ 2,956

The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, by types of concessions made, classified separately as accrual and non-accrual at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

As of December 31, 2015

	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Type of Concession:</u>				
Forbearance of Interest	10	\$ 1,891	8	\$ 247
Forgiveness of Principal	2	1,241	1	357
Forbearance of Principal	6	2,798	8	158
Rate Reduction Only	15	1,869	2	226
Rate Reduction, Forbearance of Interest	39	2,504	23	383
Rate Reduction, Forbearance of Principal	12	3,316	15	256
Rate Reduction, Forgiveness of Interest	9	795	2	359
Rate Reduction, Forgiveness of Principal	1	4	-	-
Total	94	\$ 14,418	59	\$ 1,986

As of December 31, 2014

	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Type of Concession:</u>				
Forbearance of Interest	10	\$ 1,917	4	\$ 270
Forgiveness of Principal	5	2,394	-	-
Forbearance of Principal	6	165	-	-
Rate Reduction Only	16	3,677	4	477
Rate Reduction, Forbearance of Interest	31	2,160	21	1,738
Rate Reduction, Forbearance of Principal	19	1,981	2	13
Rate Reduction, Forgiveness of Interest	4	460	-	-
Rate Reduction, Forgiveness of Principal	1	5	1	25
Total	92	\$ 12,759	32	\$ 2,523

The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, by collateral types, classified separately as accrual and non-accrual at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

As of December 31, 2015

	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Collateral type:</u>				
Warehouse	4	\$ 608	1	\$ 198
Raw Land	6	165	3	62
Apartment	1	1,314	-	-
Hotel & Motel	3	1,882	-	-
Office	3	499	-	-
Retail, including Strip Centers	3	1,335	1	42
1-4 Family Residential	58	8,329	22	1,139
Church	-	-	1	357
Automobile/Equipment/CD	15	61	30	184
Unsecured	1	225	1	4
Total	94	\$ 14,418	59	\$ 1,986

As of December 31, 2014

	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Collateral type:</u>				
Warehouse	6	\$ 933	-	\$ -
Raw Land	11	1,046	6	292
Hotel & Motel	3	2,041	-	-
Office	4	1,634	-	-
Retail, including Strip Centers	4	1,203	2	660
1-4 Family Residential	47	5,203	12	1,501
Church	1	361	-	-
Automobile/Equipment/CD	14	97	12	70
Unsecured	2	241	-	-
Total	92	\$ 12,759	32	\$ 2,523

As of December 31, 2015 and 2014, the Company had a balance of \$10.0 million and \$1.2 million, respectively, in troubled debt restructurings included in purchased non-covered loans. The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings by loan class of purchased non-covered loans, classified separately as accrual and non-accrual at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<i>As of December 31, 2015</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	1	\$ 2	2	\$ 21
Real estate – construction & development	1	363	3	42
Real estate – commercial & farmland	14	6,214	3	412
Real estate – residential	13	2,789	4	180
Consumer installment	2	5	2	3
Total	<u>31</u>	<u>\$ 9,373</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>\$ 658</u>

<i>As of December 31, 2014</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	-	\$ -	-	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	1	317	-	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	1	346	-	-
Real estate – residential	6	547	1	25
Consumer installment	1	2	-	-
Total	<u>9</u>	<u>\$ 1,212</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>\$ 25</u>

The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings by loan class of purchased non-covered loans, classified separately as those currently paying under restructured terms and those that have defaulted (defined as 30 days past due) under restructured terms at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<i>As of December 31, 2015</i>	Loans Currently Paying Under Restructured Terms		Loans that have Defaulted Under Restructured Terms	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	3	\$ 23	-	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	2	374	2	30
Real estate – commercial & farmland	15	6,570	2	57
Real estate – residential	9	2,086	8	883
Consumer installment	3	7	1	1
Total	<u>32</u>	<u>\$ 9,060</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>\$ 971</u>

<i>As of December 31, 2014</i>	Loans Currently Paying Under Restructured Terms		Loans that have Defaulted Under Restructured Terms	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	-	\$ -	-	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	-	-	1	317
Real estate – commercial & farmland	1	346	-	-
Real estate – residential	5	480	2	92
Consumer installment	-	-	1	2
Total	<u>6</u>	<u>\$ 826</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>\$ 411</u>

The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings included in purchased non-covered loans, by types of concessions made, classified separately as accrual and non-accrual at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<i>As of December 31, 2015</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Type of Concession:</u>				
Forbearance of Interest	4	\$ 1,465	2	\$ 87
Forbearance of Principal	2	574	-	-
Payment Modification Only	2	892	-	-
Forbearance of Principal, extended amortization	1	86	1	355
Rate Reduction Only	8	4,054	2	77
Rate Reduction, Forgiveness of Interest	2	152	-	-
Rate Reduction, Forbearance of Interest	8	1,011	8	118
Rate Reduction, Forbearance of Principal	4	1,139	1	21
Total	<u>31</u>	<u>\$ 9,373</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>\$ 658</u>

<i>As of December 31, 2014</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Type of Concession:</u>				
Forbearance of Interest	2	\$ 69	-	\$ -
Payment Modification Only	1	346	-	-
Rate Reduction Only	2	373	1	25
Rate Reduction, Forgiveness of Interest	2	155	-	-
Rate Reduction, Forbearance of Interest	1	231	-	-
Rate Reduction, Forbearance of Principal	1	38	-	-
Total	<u>9</u>	<u>\$ 1,212</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>\$ 25</u>

The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings included in purchased non-covered loans, by collateral types, classified separately as accrual and non-accrual at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<i>As of December 31, 2015</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Collateral type:</u>				
Warehouse	3	\$ 1,722	-	\$ -
Raw Land	-	-	4	63
Hotel & Motel	1	158	-	-
Retail, including Strip Centers	5	3,421	-	-
Office	2	530	-	-
1-4 Family Residential	17	3,535	6	571
Automobile/Equipment/Inventory	3	7	4	24
Total	<u>31</u>	<u>\$ 9,373</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>\$ 658</u>

<i>As of December 31, 2014</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Collateral type:</u>				
Warehouse	1	\$ 346	-	\$ -
Raw Land	2	373	-	-
1-4 Family Residential	5	491	1	25
Automobile/Equipment/Inventory	1	2	-	-
Total	<u>9</u>	<u>\$ 1,212</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>\$ 25</u>

As of December 31, 2015 and 2014, the Company had a balance of \$15.5 million and \$24.6 million, respectively, in troubled debt restructurings included in covered loans. The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings by loan class of covered loans, classified separately as accrual and non-accrual at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<i>As of December 31, 2015</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	-	\$ -	2	\$ 1
Real estate – construction & development	4	779	-	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	4	1,967	3	1,067
Real estate – residential	97	10,529	26	1,116
Consumer installment	2	8	-	-
Total	107	\$ 13,283	31	\$ 2,184

<i>As of December 31, 2014</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	2	\$ 40	2	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	4	3,037	2	29
Real estate – commercial & farmland	14	8,079	5	1,082
Real estate – residential	96	11,460	8	831
Consumer installment	1	3	-	-
Total	117	\$ 22,619	17	\$ 1,942

The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings by loan class of covered loans, classified separately as those currently paying under restructured terms and those that have defaulted (defined as 30 days past due) under restructured terms at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<i>As of December 31, 2015</i>	Loans Currently Paying Under Restructured Terms		Loans that have Defaulted Under Restructured Terms	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	2	\$ -	-	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	4	779	-	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	5	2,890	2	144
Real estate – residential	95	9,057	28	2,589
Consumer installment	2	8	-	-
Total	108	\$ 12,734	30	\$ 2,733

<i>As of December 31, 2014</i>	Loans Currently Paying Under Restructured Terms		Loans that have Defaulted Under Restructured Terms	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	4	\$ 40	-	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	4	3,037	2	29
Real estate – commercial & farmland	18	9,082	1	79
Real estate – residential	79	9,897	25	2,394
Consumer installment	1	3	-	-
Total	106	\$ 22,059	28	\$ 2,502

The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings included in covered loans, by types of concessions made, classified separately as accrual and non-accrual at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<i>As of December 31, 2015</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Type of Concession:				
Forbearance of Interest	5	\$ 1,347	4	\$ 88
Forbearance of Principal	-	-	2	4
Rate Reduction Only	84	10,270	7	744
Rate Reduction, Forbearance of Interest	8	564	16	422
Rate Reduction, Forbearance of Principal	7	708	2	926
Rate Reduction, Forgiveness of Interest	3	394	-	-
Total	107	\$ 13,283	31	\$ 2,184

<i>As of December 31, 2014</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Type of Concession:				
Forbearance of Interest	3	\$ 1,532	3	\$ 88
Forbearance of Principal	1	-	1	-
Rate Reduction Only	97	17,360	7	1,626
Rate Reduction, Forbearance of Interest	5	274	3	14
Rate Reduction, Forbearance of Principal	8	3,052	3	214
Rate Reduction, Forgiveness of Interest	3	401	-	-
Total	117	\$ 22,619	17	\$ 1,942

The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings included in covered loans, by collateral types, classified separately as accrual and non-accrual at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<i>As of December 31, 2015</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Collateral type:				
Raw Land	5	\$ 1,321	-	\$ -
Hotel & Motel	1	620	1	923
Retail, including Strip Centers	2	537	1	6
1-4 Family Residential	97	10,742	27	1,255
Automobile/Equipment/Inventory	2	63	2	-
Total	107	\$ 13,283	31	\$ 2,184

<i>As of December 31, 2014</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Collateral type:				
Warehouse	2	\$ 1,510	1	\$ 79
Raw Land	3	411	1	14
Hotel & Motel	5	4,395	-	-
Office	1	473	2	858
Retail, including Strip Centers	6	4,174	2	145
1-4 Family Residential	98	11,616	9	846
Automobile/Equipment/Inventory	1	3	2	-
Unsecured	1	37	-	-
Total	117	\$ 22,619	17	\$ 1,942

LIQUIDITY AND INTEREST RATE SENSITIVITY

Liquidity management involves the matching of the cash flow requirements of customers, who may be either depositors desiring to withdraw funds or borrowers needing assurance that sufficient funds will be available to meet their credit needs, and the ability of our Company to meet those needs. We seek to meet liquidity requirements primarily through management of short-term investments (principally interest-bearing deposits in banks) and monthly amortizing loans. Another source of liquidity is the repayment of maturing single payment loans. In addition, our Company maintains relationships with correspondent banks, including the FHLB and the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, which could provide funds on short notice, if needed.

A principal objective of our asset/liability management strategy is to minimize our exposure to changes in interest rates by matching the maturity and repricing horizons of interest-earning assets and interest-bearing liabilities. This strategy is overseen in part through the direction of our Asset and Liability Committee (the “ALCO Committee”) which establishes policies and monitors results to control interest rate sensitivity.

As part of our interest rate risk management policy, the ALCO Committee examines the extent to which its assets and liabilities are “interest rate sensitive” and monitors its interest rate-sensitivity “gap.” An asset or liability is considered to be interest rate sensitive if it will reprice or mature within the time period analyzed, usually one year or less. The interest rate-sensitivity gap is the difference between the interest-earning assets and interest-bearing liabilities scheduled to mature or reprice within such time period. A gap is considered positive when the amount of interest rate-sensitive assets exceeds the amount of interest rate-sensitive liabilities. A gap is considered negative when the amount of interest rate-sensitive liabilities exceeds the interest rate-sensitive assets. During a period of rising interest rates, a negative gap would tend to adversely affect net interest income, while a positive gap would tend to result in an increase in net interest income. During a period of falling interest rates, a negative gap would tend to result in an increase in net interest income, while a positive gap would tend to adversely affect net interest income. If our assets and liabilities were equally flexible and moved concurrently, the impact of any increase or decrease in interest rates on net interest income would be minimal.

A simple interest rate “gap” analysis by itself may not be an accurate indicator of how net interest income will be affected by changes in interest rates. Accordingly, the ALCO Committee also evaluates how the repayment of particular assets and liabilities is impacted by changes in interest rates. Income associated with interest-earning assets and costs associated with interest-bearing liabilities may not be affected uniformly by changes in interest rates. In addition, the magnitude and duration of changes in interest rates may have a significant impact on net interest income. For example, although certain assets and liabilities may have similar maturities or periods of repricing, they may not react identically to changes in market interest rates. Interest rates on certain types of assets and liabilities fluctuate in advance of changes in general market interest rates, while interest rates on other types may lag behind changes in general market rates. In addition, certain assets, such as adjustable rate mortgage loans, have features (generally referred to as “interest rate caps”) which limit changes in interest rates on a short-term basis and over the life of the asset. In the event of a change in interest rates, prepayment and early withdrawal levels also could deviate significantly from those assumed in calculating the interest rate gap. The ability of many borrowers to service their debts also may decrease in the event of an interest rate increase.

We manage the mix of asset and liability maturities in an effort to control the effects of changes in the general level of interest rates on net interest income. Except for its effect on the general level of interest rates, inflation does not have a material impact on the balance sheet due to the rate variability and short-term maturities of its earning assets. In particular, approximately 31.1% of earning assets mature or reprice within one year or less. Mortgage loans, generally our loan with the longest maturity, are usually made with five to fifteen year maturities, but with either a variable interest rate or a fixed rate with an adjustment between origination date and maturity date.

The following table sets forth the distribution of the repricing of our interest-earning assets and interest-bearing liabilities as of December 31, 2015, the interest rate sensitivity gap (i.e., interest rate sensitive assets minus interest rate sensitive liabilities), the cumulative interest rate sensitivity gap, the interest rate sensitivity gap ratio (i.e., interest rate sensitive assets divided by interest rate sensitive liabilities) and the cumulative interest rate sensitivity gap ratio. The table also sets forth the time periods in which earning assets and liabilities will mature or may reprice in accordance with their contractual terms. However, the table does not necessarily indicate the impact of general interest rate movements on the net interest margin since the repricing of various categories of assets and liabilities is subject to competitive pressures and the needs of our customers. In addition, various assets and liabilities indicated as repricing within the same period may in fact reprice at different times within such period and at different rates.

	At December 31, 2015				
	Maturing or Repricing Within				
	Zero to Three Months	Three Months to One Year	One to Five Years	Over Five Years	Total
(Dollars in Thousands)					
Interest-earning assets:					
Short-term assets	\$ 272,045	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 272,045
Investment securities	3,248	2,173	54,966	722,798	783,185
Mortgage loans held for sale	111,182	-	-	-	111,182
Loans	664,754	199,685	1,012,992	529,446	2,406,877
Purchased, non-covered loans	146,040	93,711	307,254	224,549	771,554
Purchased, non-covered loan pools	326	13,619	219,805	359,213	592,963
Covered loans	46,433	23,093	53,624	14,379	137,529
	<u>1,244,028</u>	<u>332,281</u>	<u>1,648,641</u>	<u>1,850,385</u>	<u>5,075,335</u>
Interest-bearing liabilities:					
Interest-bearing demand deposits	2,468,049	-	-	-	2,468,049
Savings	242,979	-	-	-	242,979
Time deposits	203,550	469,558	160,822	4,475	838,405
Short-term borrowings	63,585	15,000	24,000	-	102,585
Trust preferred securities	-	32,730	-	37,144	69,874
	<u>2,978,163</u>	<u>517,288</u>	<u>184,822</u>	<u>41,619</u>	<u>3,721,892</u>
Interest rate sensitivity gap	<u>\$(1,734,135)</u>	<u>\$(185,007)</u>	<u>\$1,463,819</u>	<u>\$1,808,766</u>	<u>\$ 1,353,443</u>
Cumulative interest rate sensitivity gap	<u>\$(1,734,135)</u>	<u>\$(1,919,142)</u>	<u>\$(455,323)</u>	<u>\$1,353,443</u>	
Interest rate sensitivity gap ratio	<u>0.42</u>	<u>0.64</u>	<u>8.92</u>	<u>44.46</u>	
Cumulative interest rate sensitivity gap ratio	<u>0.42</u>	<u>0.45</u>	<u>0.88</u>	<u>1.36</u>	

INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO

Following is a summary of the carrying value of investment securities available for sale as of the end of each reported period:

	December 31,		
	2015	2014	2013
(Dollars in Thousands)			
U.S. Government sponsored agencies	\$ 14,890	\$ 14,678	\$ 13,926
State, county and municipal securities	161,316	141,375	112,754
Corporate debt securities	6,017	11,040	10,325
Collateralized debt obligations	-	-	1,480
Mortgage-backed securities	600,962	374,712	347,750
	<u>\$ 783,185</u>	<u>\$ 541,805</u>	<u>\$ 486,235</u>

The amounts of securities available for sale in each category as of December 31, 2015 are shown in the following table according to contractual maturity classifications: (i) one year or less, (ii) after one year through five years, (iii) after five years through ten years and (iv) after ten years.

	U.S. Government Sponsored Agencies		State, County and Municipal		Corporate debt		Mortgage-backed	
	Amount	Yield(1)	Amount	Yield(1)(2)	Amount	Yield(1)	Amount	Yield (1)
	(Dollars in Thousands)							
One year or less	\$ -	-%	\$ 5,421	2.56%	\$ -	4.36%	\$ -	-%
After one year through five years	4,958	1.50	45,490	2.89	2,633	5.69	887	2.88
After five years through ten years	9,932	2.02	53,442	3.02	494	3.26	62,886	2.28
After ten years	-	-	56,963	2.80	2,890	4.40	537,189	2.42
	<u>\$14,890</u>	1.85%	<u>\$161,316</u>	2.89%	<u>\$ 6,017</u>	4.87%	<u>\$ 600,962</u>	2.41%

- (1) Yields were computed using coupon interest, adding discount accretion or subtracting premium amortization, as appropriate, on a ratable basis over the life of each security. The weighted average yield for each maturity range was computed using the acquisition price of each security in that range.
- (2) Yields on securities of state and political subdivisions are stated on a taxable-equivalent basis, using a tax rate of 35%.

The investment portfolio consists of securities which are classified as available for sale and recorded at fair value with unrealized gains and losses excluded from earnings and reported in accumulated other comprehensive income, net of the related deferred tax effect.

The amortization of premiums and accretion of discounts are recognized in interest income using methods approximating the interest method over the life of the securities. Realized gains and losses, determined on the basis of the cost of specific securities sold, are included in earnings on the trade date. Declines in the fair value of securities below their cost that are deemed to be other-than-temporary are reflected in earnings as realized losses.

The Company's methodology for determining whether other-than-temporary impairment losses exist include management considering (i) the length of time and the extent to which the fair value has been less than cost, (ii) the financial condition and near-term prospects of the issuer and (iii) the intent and ability of the Company to retain its investment in the issuer for a period of time sufficient to allow for any anticipated recovery in fair value.

Management evaluates securities for other-than-temporary impairment at least on a quarterly basis, and more frequently when economic or market concerns warrant such evaluation. Substantially all of the unrealized losses on debt securities are related to changes in interest rates and do not affect the expected cash flows of the issuer or underlying collateral. All unrealized losses are considered temporary because each security carries an acceptable investment grade, the Company has the intent and ability to hold such securities until maturity and it is more likely than not that the Company will not be required to sell these securities prior to recovery or maturity. The Company's investments in subordinated debt include investments in regional and super-regional banks on which the Company conducts regular analysis through review of financial information or credit ratings. Investments in preferred securities are also concentrated in the preferred obligations of regional and super-regional banks through non-pooled investment structures. The Company did not hold any investments in "pooled" trust preferred securities at December 31, 2015.

DEPOSITS

Average amount of various deposit classes and the average rates paid thereon are presented below:

	Year Ended December 31,			
	2015		2014	
	Amount	Rate	Amount	Rate
	(Dollars in Thousands)			
Noninterest-bearing demand	\$ 1,227,682	0.00%	\$ 751,874	0.00%
NOW	877,949	0.17	724,461	0.18
Money Market	1,074,349	0.30	805,601	0.37
Savings	209,206	0.08	150,266	0.11
Time	810,344	0.61	768,420	0.66
Total deposits	<u>\$4,199,530</u>	0.23%	<u>\$3,200,622</u>	0.30%

We have a large, stable base of time deposits with little or no dependence on what we consider volatile deposits. Volatile deposits, in management's opinion, are those deposit accounts that are overly rate sensitive and apt to move if our rate offerings are not at or near the top of the market. Generally speaking, these are brokered deposits or time deposits in amount greater than \$100,000.

The amounts of time certificates of deposit issued in amounts of \$100,000 or more as of December 31, 2015, are shown below by category, which is based on time remaining until maturity of (i) three months or less, (ii) over three through twelve months and (iii) greater than one year.

	(Dollars in Thousands)
Three months or less	\$ 92,939
Three months to one year	225,135
One year or greater	<u>79,065</u>
Total	<u>\$ 397,139</u>

OFF-BALANCE SHEET ARRANGEMENTS AND CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS

In the ordinary course of business, our Bank has granted commitments to extend credit to approved customers. Generally, these commitments to extend credit have been granted on a temporary basis for seasonal or inventory requirements and have been approved within the Bank's credit guidelines. Our Bank has also granted commitments to approved customers for financial standby letters of credit. These commitments are recorded in the financial statements when funds are disbursed or the financial instruments become payable. The Bank uses the same credit policies for these off-balance sheet commitments as it does for financial instruments that are recorded in the consolidated financial statements. Commitments generally have fixed expiration dates or other termination clauses and may require payment of a fee. Since many of the commitment amounts expire without being drawn upon, the total commitment amounts do not necessarily represent future cash requirements.

The following is a summary of the commitments outstanding at December 31, 2015 and 2014:

	December 31,	
	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Commitments to extend credit	\$ 548,898	\$ 293,517
Unused lines of credit	52,798	49,567
Financial standby letters of credit	14,712	9,683
Mortgage interest rate lock commitments	<u>77,710</u>	<u>38,868</u>
	<u>\$ 694,118</u>	<u>\$ 391,635</u>

The following table summarizes short-term borrowings for the periods indicated:

	Years Ended December 31,					
	2015		2014		2013	
	(Dollars in Thousands)					
	<u>Average Balance</u>	<u>Average Rate</u>	<u>Average Balance</u>	<u>Average Rate</u>	<u>Average Balance</u>	<u>Average Rate</u>
Federal funds purchased and securities sold under agreement to repurchase	<u>\$ 50,988</u>	<u>0.34%</u>	<u>\$ 47,136</u>	<u>0.35%</u>	<u>\$ 26,908</u>	<u>0.54%</u>
	<u>Total Balance</u>		<u>Total Balance</u>		<u>Total Balance</u>	
Total maximum short-term borrowings outstanding at any month-end during the year	<u>\$ 68,300</u>		<u>\$ 73,310</u>		<u>\$ 83,516</u>	

In addition, the Company had a cash flow hedge that matures September 15, 2020 with a notional amount of \$37.1 million at December 31, 2015 and 2014, for the purpose of converting the variable rate on the junior subordinated debentures to a fixed rate of 4.11%. The interest rate swap, which is classified as a cash flow hedge, is indexed to LIBOR.

The following table sets forth certain information about contractual cash obligations as of December 31, 2015.

	Payments Due After December 31, 2015				
	Total	1 Year Or Less	1-3 Years	4-5 Years	>5 Years
	(Dollars in Thousands)				
Time certificates of deposit	\$ 838,406	\$ 673,108	\$ 130,527	\$ 30,296	\$ 4,475
Deposits without a stated maturity	4,045,334	4,045,334	-	-	-
Repurchase agreements with customers	63,585	63,585	-	-	-
Operating lease obligations	14,624	3,000	5,745	4,370	1,509
Other borrowings	39,000	39,000	-	-	-
Subordinated debentures	94,335	-	-	-	94,335
Total contractual cash obligations	<u>\$ 5,095,284</u>	<u>\$4,824,027</u>	<u>\$ 136,272</u>	<u>\$ 34,666</u>	<u>\$100,319</u>

Our operating leases represent short-term obligations, normally with maturities of less than three years. Many of the operating leases have thirty-day cancellation provisions. The total contractual obligations for operating leases do not require a material amount of our cash funds.

At December 31, 2015, estimated costs to complete construction projects in progress and other binding commitments for capital expenditures were less than \$1.5 million.

CAPITAL ADEQUACY

Capital Purchase Program

On November 21, 2008, the Company elected to participate in the CPP established by the EESA. Accordingly, on such date, the Company issued and sold to the Treasury, for an aggregate cash purchase price of \$52 million, (i) 52,000 Preferred Shares having a liquidation preference of \$1,000 per share, and (ii) a ten-year Warrant to purchase up to 679,443 shares of Common Stock, at an exercise price of \$11.48 per share. The issuance and sale of these securities was a private placement exempt from registration pursuant to Section 4(2) of the Securities Act. On June 14, 2012, the Preferred Shares were sold by the Treasury through a registered public offering. On August 22, 2012, the Company repurchased the Warrant from the Treasury for \$2.67 million, and in December 2012, the Company repurchased 24,000 of the outstanding Preferred Shares. In March 2014, the Company redeemed the remaining 28,000 outstanding Preferred Shares.

Capital Regulations

The capital resources of the Company are monitored on a periodic basis by state and federal regulatory authorities. During 2015, the Company's capital increased \$148.7 million, primarily due to the issuance of Common Stock of \$114.9 million and net income available to common shareholders of \$40.8 million, partially offset by the cash dividends paid on common shares of \$6.4 million. Other capital related transactions, such as other comprehensive income, Common Stock issuances through the exercise of stock options and issuances of shares of restricted stock, account for only a small change in the capital of the Company. During 2014, the Company's capital increased \$49.3 million, primarily due to the issuance of Common Stock of \$34.5 million related to the Coastal acquisition, net income available to common shareholders of \$38.4 million and other comprehensive income of \$6.4 million, partially offset by the redemption of preferred stock of \$28.0 million. Other capital related transactions, such as Common Stock issuances through the exercise of stock options and issuances of shares of restricted stock, account for only a small change in the capital of the Company.

In accordance with risk capital guidelines issued by the Federal Reserve, we are required to maintain a minimum standard of total capital to risk-weighted assets of 8%. Additionally, all member banks must maintain "core" or "Tier 1" capital of at least 4% of total assets ("leverage ratio"). Member banks operating at or near the 4% capital level are expected to have well-diversified risks, including no undue interest rate risk exposure, excellent control systems, good earnings, high asset quality and well managed on- and off-balance sheet activities, and, in general, be considered strong banking organizations with a composite 1 rating under the CAMEL rating system of banks. For all but the most highly rated banks meeting the above conditions, the minimum leverage ratio is to be 4% plus an additional 1% to 2%.

The following table summarizes the regulatory capital levels of Ameris at December 31, 2015:

	<u>Actual</u>		<u>Required</u>		<u>Excess</u>	
	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Percent</u>
	<u>(Dollars in Thousands)</u>					
Leverage capital						
Consolidated	\$ 462,961	8.70%	\$ 212,771	4.00%	\$ 250,190	4.70%
Ameris Bank	495,615	9.32	212,608	4.00	283,007	5.32
Risk-based capital:						
Common equity tier 1 capital						
Consolidated	403,322	9.54	190,157	4.50	213,165	5.04
Ameris Bank	495,615	11.74	189,949	4.50	305,666	7.24
Core capital						
Consolidated	462,961	10.96	253,543	6.00	209,418	4.96
Ameris Bank	495,615	11.74	253,266	6.00	242,349	5.74
Total capital						
Consolidated	484,023	11.45	338,057	8.00	145,966	3.45
Ameris Bank	516,677	12.24	337,687	8.00	178,990	4.24

INFLATION

The consolidated financial statements and related consolidated financial data presented herein have been prepared in accordance with GAAP and practices within the banking industry which require the measurement of financial position and operating results in terms of historical dollars without considering the changes in the relative purchasing power of money over time due to inflation. Unlike most industrial companies, virtually all the assets and liabilities of a financial institution are monetary in nature. As a result, interest rates have a more significant impact on a financial institution's performance than the effects of general levels of inflation.

QUARTERLY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The following table sets forth certain consolidated quarterly financial information of the Company. This information is derived from unaudited consolidated financial statements, which include, in the opinion of management, all normal recurring adjustments which management considers necessary for a fair presentation of the results for such periods.

	Quarters Ended December 31, 2015			
	4	3	2	1
	(Dollars in Thousands, Except Per Share Data)			
Selected Income Statement Data:				
Interest income	\$ 52,601	\$ 51,195	\$ 44,229	\$ 42,368
Interest expense	<u>3,983</u>	<u>3,796</u>	<u>3,541</u>	<u>3,536</u>
Net interest income	48,618	47,399	40,688	38,832
Provision for loan losses	<u>553</u>	<u>986</u>	<u>2,656</u>	<u>1,069</u>
Net interest income after provision for loan losses	48,065	46,413	38,032	37,763
Noninterest income	22,407	24,978	20,626	17,575
Noninterest expense	51,221	47,950	51,152	40,812
Acquisition related expenses	<u>1,807</u>	<u>446</u>	<u>5,712</u>	<u>15</u>
Income before income taxes	17,444	22,995	1,794	14,511
Income tax	<u>3,296</u>	<u>7,368</u>	<u>486</u>	<u>4,747</u>
Net income	14,148	15,627	1,308	9,764
Preferred stock dividends	-	-	-	-
Net income available to common stockholders	<u>\$ 14,148</u>	<u>\$ 15,627</u>	<u>\$ 1,308</u>	<u>\$ 9,764</u>

Per Share Data:

Net income – basic	0.44	0.49	0.04	0.32
Net income – diluted	0.43	0.48	0.04	0.32
Common Dividends (Cash)	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
Common Dividends (Stock)	-	-	-	-

	Quarters Ended December 31, 2014			
	4	3	2	1
	(Dollars in Thousands, Except Per Share Data)			
Selected Income Statement Data:				
Interest income	\$ 44,900	\$ 43,186	\$ 38,607	\$ 37,873
Interest expense	<u>3,894</u>	<u>4,054</u>	<u>3,343</u>	<u>3,389</u>
Net interest income	41,006	39,132	35,264	34,484
Provision for loan losses	<u>888</u>	<u>1,669</u>	<u>1,365</u>	<u>1,726</u>
Net interest income after provision for loan losses	40,118	37,463	33,899	32,758
Noninterest income	16,362	17,901	15,819	12,754
Noninterest expense	41,666	38,028	34,446	32,789
Acquisition related expenses	<u>67</u>	<u>551</u>	<u>2,872</u>	<u>450</u>
Income before income taxes	14,747	16,785	12,400	12,273
Income tax	<u>4,167</u>	<u>5,122</u>	<u>4,270</u>	<u>3,923</u>
Net income	10,580	11,663	8,130	8,350
Preferred stock dividends	-	-	-	286
Net income available to common stockholders	<u>\$ 10,580</u>	<u>\$ 11,663</u>	<u>\$ 8,130</u>	<u>\$ 8,064</u>

Per Share Data:

Net income – basic	0.40	0.44	0.32	0.32
Net income – diluted	0.39	0.43	0.32	0.32
Common Dividends (Cash)	0.05	0.05	0.05	-
Common Dividends (Stock)	-	-	-	-

ITEM 7A. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DISCLOSURES ABOUT MARKET RISK

We are exposed only to U.S. Dollar interest rate changes and, accordingly, we manage exposure by considering the possible changes in the net interest margin. We do not have any trading instruments nor do we classify any portion of the investment portfolio as trading. Finally, we have no exposure to foreign currency exchange rate risk, commodity price risk or other market risks.

Interest rates play a major part in the net interest income of a financial institution. The sensitivity to rate changes is known as “interest rate risk.” The repricing of interest-earning assets and interest-bearing liabilities can influence the changes in net interest income. As part of our asset/liability management program, the timing of repriced assets and liabilities is referred to as gap management. Our policy is to maintain a management-adjusted gap ratio in the one-year time horizon of .80 to 1.20. As indicated by the table below, we are slightly liability sensitive in relation to changes in market interest rates in the one-year time horizon, but we become asset sensitive over a two-year time horizon. Being liability sensitive would result in net interest income decreasing in a rising rate environment and increasing in a declining rate environment.

We use simulation analysis to monitor changes in net interest income due to changes in market interest rates. The simulation of rising, declining and flat interest rate scenarios allow management to monitor and adjust interest rate sensitivity to minimize the impact of market interest rate swings. The analysis of the impact on net interest income over a twelve-month period is subjected to a gradual 200 basis points increase or 200 basis points decrease in market rates on net interest income and is monitored on a quarterly basis. Our most recent model projects net interest income would decrease slightly if rates rise 200 basis points gradually over the next year. A scenario involving a 200 basis points decrease is irrelevant at this time with current market rates being at or near zero since the last reduction of the federal funds target rate by the Federal Reserve on December 16, 2008.

The following table presents the earnings simulation model’s projected impact of a change in interest rates on the projected baseline net interest income for the 12- and 24-month periods commencing January 1, 2016. This change in interest rates assumes parallel shifts in the yield curve and does not take into account changes in the slope of the yield curve.

Earnings Simulation Model Results

Change in Interest Rates (in bps)	% Change in Projected Baseline Net Interest Income	
	12 Months	24 Months
+400	-1.1%	3.9%
+300	-0.6%	3.6%
+200	-0.4%	2.7%
+100	-0.3%	1.4%
-100	Not meaningful	Not meaningful
-200	Not meaningful	Not meaningful
-300	Not meaningful	Not meaningful
-400	Not meaningful	Not meaningful

In the event of a shift in interest rates, we may take certain actions intended to mitigate the negative impact to net interest income or to maximize the positive impact to net interest income. These actions may include, but are not limited to, restructuring of interest earning assets and interest bearing liabilities, seeking alternative funding sources or investment opportunities and modifying the pricing or terms of loans, leases and deposits.

Impact of Inflation and Changing Prices

The consolidated financial statements and related notes presented elsewhere in this report have been prepared in accordance with GAAP. This requires the measurement of financial position and operating results in terms of historical dollars without considering the changes in the relative purchasing power of money over time due to inflation. Unlike most industrial companies, the vast majority of our assets and liabilities are monetary in nature. As a result, interest rates have a greater impact on our performance than do the effects of general levels of inflation. Interest rates do not necessarily move in the same direction or to the same extent as the prices of goods and services.

ITEM 8. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

Reports of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firms

Consolidated Balance Sheets – December 31, 2015 and 2014

Consolidated Statements of Income – Years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013

Consolidated Statements of Comprehensive Income – Years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013

Consolidated Statements of Changes in Stockholders' Equity – Years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013

Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows – Years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013

Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

ITEM 9. CHANGES IN AND DISAGREEMENTS WITH ACCOUNTANTS ON ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

None.

ITEM 9A. CONTROLS AND PROCEDURES

Disclosure Controls and Procedures

The Company's Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer have evaluated the Company's disclosure controls and procedures (as such term is defined in Rules 13a-15(e) or 15d-15(e) promulgated under the Exchange Act as of the end of the period covered by this Annual Report, as required by paragraph (b) of Rules 13a-15 or 15d-15 of the Exchange Act. Based on such evaluation, such officers have concluded that, as of the end of the period covered by this Annual Report, the Company's disclosure controls and procedures are effective.

Management's Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting

Management's Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting is set forth on page F-3 of this Annual Report.

Changes in Internal Control Over Financial Reporting

During the quarter ended December 31, 2015, there was no change in the Company's internal control over financial reporting identified in connection with the evaluation required by paragraph (d) of Rules 13a-15 or 15d-15 of the Exchange Act that has materially affected, or is reasonably likely to materially affect, the Company's internal control over financial reporting.

ITEM 9B. OTHER INFORMATION

Not applicable.

PART III

ITEM 10. DIRECTORS, EXECUTIVE OFFICERS AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The information set forth under the captions "Proposal 1 – Election of Directors," "Board and Committee Matters," "Executive Officers" and "Section 16(a) Beneficial Ownership Reporting Compliance" in the Proxy Statement to be used in connection with the solicitation of proxies for the Company's 2016 Annual Meeting of Shareholders, to be filed with the SEC, is incorporated herein by reference.

Code of Ethics

Ameris has adopted a code of ethics that is applicable to all employees, including its Chief Executive Officer and all senior financial officers, including its Chief Financial Officer and principal accounting officer. Ameris shall provide to any person without charge, upon request, a copy of its code of ethics. Such requests should be directed to the Corporate Secretary of Ameris Bancorp at 310 First St., SE, Moultrie, Georgia 31768.

ITEM 11. EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

The information set forth under the caption "Executive Compensation" in the Proxy Statement to be used in connection with the solicitation of proxies for the Company's 2016 Annual Meeting of Shareholders, to be filed with the SEC, is incorporated herein by reference.

ITEM 12. SECURITY OWNERSHIP OF CERTAIN BENEFICIAL OWNERS AND MANAGEMENT AND RELATED STOCKHOLDER MATTERS

The information set forth under the caption “Security Ownership of Certain Beneficial Owners and Management” in the Proxy Statement to be used in connection with the solicitation of proxies for the Company’s 2016 Annual Meeting of Shareholders, to be filed with the SEC, is incorporated herein by reference.

Equity Compensation Plans

The following table sets forth certain information with respect to securities to be issued under our equity compensation plans as of December 31, 2015.

<u>Plan Category</u>	<u>Number of securities to be issued upon exercise of outstanding options, warrants and rights</u>	<u>Weighted average exercise price of outstanding options, warrants and rights</u>	<u>Number of securities remaining available for future issuance under equity compensation plans</u>
Equity compensation plans approved by security holders (1)	302,270	\$ 17.27	1,120,000

- (1) Consists of (i) our 2014 Omnibus Equity Compensation Plan, which provides for the granting to directors, officers and certain other employees of qualified or nonqualified stock options, stock units, stock awards, stock appreciation rights, dividend equivalents and other stock-based awards; and (ii) the 2005 Omnibus Stock Ownership and Long-Term Incentive Plan and the ABC Bancorp Omnibus Stock Ownership and Long-Term incentive Plan that was adopted in 1997, both of which are now operative only with respect to the exercise of options that remain outstanding under such plans and under which no further awards may be granted. All securities remaining for future issuance represent awards that may be granted under the 2014 Omnibus Equity Compensation Plan.

ITEM 13. CERTAIN RELATIONSHIPS AND RELATED TRANSACTIONS, AND DIRECTOR INDEPENDENCE

The information set forth under the captions “Certain Relationships and Related Transactions” and “Proposal 1 – Election of Directors” in the Proxy Statement to be used in connection with the solicitation of proxies for the Company’s 2016 Annual Meeting of Shareholders, to be filed with the SEC, is incorporated herein by reference.

ITEM 14. PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTING FEES AND SERVICES

The information set forth under the caption “Proposal 2 – Ratification of Appointment of Independent Auditor” in the Proxy Statement to be used in connection with the solicitation of proxies for the Company’s 2016 Annual Meeting of Shareholders, to be filed with the SEC, is incorporated herein by reference.

PART IV

ITEM 15. EXHIBITS, FINANCIAL STATEMENT SCHEDULES

1. Financial statements:

(a) Ameris Bancorp and Subsidiaries:

- (i) Consolidated Balance Sheets – December 31, 2015 and 2014;
- (ii) Consolidated Statements of Income – Years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013;
- (iii) Consolidated Statements of Comprehensive Income – Years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013;
- (iv) Consolidated Statements of Changes in Stockholders’ Equity – Years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013;
- (v) Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows – Years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013; and
- (vi) Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

(b) Ameris Bancorp (parent company only):

Parent company only financial information has been included in Note 26 of the Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

2. Financial statement schedules:

All schedules are omitted as the required information is inapplicable or the information is presented in the financial statements or related notes.

3. A list of the Exhibits required by Item 601 of Regulation S-K to be filed as a part of this Annual Report is shown on the “Exhibit Index” filed herewith.

SIGNATURES

Pursuant to the requirements of Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, the Registrant has duly caused this report to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned, thereunto duly authorized.

AMERIS BANCORP

Date: February 29, 2016

By: /s/ Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.

Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.,
President and Chief Executive Officer
(principal executive officer)

POWER OF ATTORNEY

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, that each person whose signature appears below constitutes and appoints Edwin W. Hortman, Jr. as his attorney-in-fact, acting with full power of substitution for him in his name, place and stead, in any and all capacities, to sign any amendments to this Form 10-K and to file the same, with exhibits thereto, and any other documents in connection therewith, with the Securities and Exchange Commission and hereby ratifies and confirms all that said attorney-in-fact, or his substitute or substitutes, may do or cause to be done by virtue thereof.

Pursuant to the requirements of the Exchange Act, this Form 10-K has been signed by the following persons in the capacities and on the dates indicated.

Date: February 29, 2016 /s/ Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.

Edwin W. Hortman, Jr., President, Chief Executive Officer and Director
(principal executive officer)

Date: February 29, 2016 /s/ Dennis J. Zember Jr.

Dennis J. Zember Jr., Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer
(principal accounting and financial officer)

Date: February 29, 2016 /s/ William I. Bowen, Jr.

William I. Bowen, Jr., Director

Date: February 29, 2016 /s/ R. Dale Ezzell

R. Dale Ezzell, Director

Date: February 29, 2016 /s/ Leo J. Hill

Leo J. Hill, Director

Date: February 29, 2016 /s/ Daniel B. Jeter

Daniel B. Jeter, Director and Chairman of the Board

Date: February 29, 2016 /s/ Robert P. Lynch

Robert P. Lynch, Director

Date: February 29, 2016 /s/ William H. Stern

William H. Stern, Director

Date: February 29, 2016 /s/ Jimmy D. Veal

Jimmy D. Veal, Director

EXHIBIT INDEX

<u>Exhibit No.</u>	<u>Description</u>
2.1	Agreement and Plan of Merger dated as of September 30, 2015 by and between Ameris Bancorp and Jacksonville Bancorp, Inc. (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 2.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on October 1, 2015).
3.1	Articles of Incorporation of Ameris Bancorp, as amended (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 2.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Regulation A Offering Statement on Form 1-A filed with the SEC on August 14, 1987).
3.2	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.7 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 26, 1999).
3.3	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.9 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 31, 2003).
3.4	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on December 1, 2005).
3.5	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on November 21, 2008).
3.6	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on June 1, 2011).
3.7	Amended and Restated Bylaws (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2005).
4.1	Indenture between Ameris Bancorp and Wilmington Trust Company dated September 20, 2006 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.4 to Ameris Bancorp's Registration Statement on Form S-4 (Registration No. 333-138252) filed with the SEC on October 27, 2006).
4.2	Floating Rate Junior Subordinated Deferrable Interest Debenture dated September 20, 2006 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.7 to Ameris Bancorp's Registration Statement on Form S-4 (Registration No. 333-138252) filed with the SEC on October 27, 2006).
4.3	Indenture between Ameris Bancorp (as successor to The Prosperity Banking Company) and U.S. Bank National Association dated as of March 26, 2003 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.3 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.4	First Supplemental Indenture dated as of December 23, 2013 by and among Ameris Bancorp, The Prosperity Banking Company and U.S. Bank National Association (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.4 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.5	Form of Floating Rate Junior Subordinated Deferrable Interest Debenture Due 2033 (included as Exhibit A to the Indenture filed as Exhibit 4.3 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.6	Indenture between Ameris Bancorp (as successor to The Prosperity Banking Company) and Deutsche Bank Trust Company Americas dated as of June 24, 2004 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.6 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.7	First Supplemental Indenture dated as of December 23, 2013 by and among Ameris Bancorp, The Prosperity Banking Company and Deutsche Bank Trust Company Americas (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.7 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.8	Form of Floating Rate Junior Subordinated Deferrable Interest Note Due 2034 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.8 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.9	Indenture between Ameris Bancorp (as successor to The Prosperity Banking Company) and Wilmington Trust Company dated as of January 31, 2006 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.9 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.10	First Supplemental Indenture dated as of December 23, 2013 by and among Ameris Bancorp, The Prosperity Banking Company and Wilmington Trust Company (pertaining to Indenture dated as of January 31, 2006) (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.10 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.11	Form of Floating Rate Junior Subordinated Deferrable Interest Debenture Due 2036 (included as Exhibit A to the Indenture filed as Exhibit 4.9 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).

<u>Exhibit No.</u>	<u>Description</u>
4.12	Indenture between Ameris Bank (as successor to Prosperity Bank) and Wilmington Trust Company dated as of May 11, 2006 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.12 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.13	First Supplemental Indenture dated as of December 23, 2013 by and among Ameris Bank, Prosperity Bank and Wilmington Trust Company (pertaining to Indenture dated as of May 11, 2006) (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.13 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.14	Form of Floating Rate Junior Subordinated Debenture Due 2016 (included as Exhibit A to the Indenture filed as Exhibit 4.12 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.15	Indenture between Ameris Bancorp (as successor to The Prosperity Banking Company) and Wilmington Trust Company dated as of June 30, 2006 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.15 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.16	First Supplemental Indenture dated as of December 23, 2013 by and among Ameris Bancorp, The Prosperity Banking Company and Wilmington Trust Company (pertaining to Indenture dated as of June 30, 2006) (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.16 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.17	Form of Floating Rate Junior Subordinated Debenture Due 2016 (included as Exhibit A to the Indenture filed as Exhibit 4.15 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.18	Indenture between Ameris Bancorp (as successor to The Prosperity Banking Company) and Wilmington Trust Company dated as of September 20, 2007 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.18 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.19	First Supplemental Indenture dated as of December 23, 2013 by and among Ameris Bancorp, The Prosperity Banking Company and Wilmington Trust Company (pertaining to Indenture dated as of September 20, 2007) (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.19 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.20	Form of Fixed/Floating Rate Junior Subordinated Deferrable Interest Debenture Due 2037 (included as Exhibit A to the Indenture filed as Exhibit 4.18 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2014).
4.21	Indenture between Ameris Bancorp (as successor to Coastal Bankshares, Inc.) and Wells Fargo Bank, National Association dated as of August 27, 2003 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on July 1, 2014).
4.22	First Supplemental Indenture dated as of June 30, 2014 by and among Ameris Bancorp and Wells Fargo Bank, National Association (pertaining to Indenture dated as of August 27, 2003) (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.2 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on July 1, 2014).
4.23	Form of Junior Subordinated Debt Security Due 2033 (included as Exhibit A to the Indenture filed as Exhibit 4.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on July 1, 2014).
4.24	Indenture between Ameris Bancorp (as successor to Coastal Bankshares, Inc.) and U.S. Bank National Association dated as of December 14, 2005 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.4 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on July 1, 2014).
4.25	First Supplemental Indenture dated as of June 30, 2014 by and among Ameris Bancorp, Coastal Bankshares, Inc. and U.S. Bank National Association (pertaining to Indenture dated as of December 14, 2005) (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.5 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on July 1, 2014).
4.26	Form of Junior Subordinated Debt Security Due 2035 (included as Exhibit A to the Indenture filed as Exhibit 4.4 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on July 1, 2014).
4.27	Indenture between Ameris Bancorp (as successor to Merchants & Southern Banks of Florida, Incorporated) and Wilmington Trust Company dated as of March 17, 2005 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on May 27, 2015).
4.28	First Supplemental Indenture dated as of May 22, 2015 by and among Ameris Bancorp, Merchants & Southern Banks of Florida, Incorporated and Wilmington Trust Company (pertaining to Indenture dated as of March 17, 2005) (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.2 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on May 27, 2015).
4.29	Form of Floating Rate Junior Subordinated Deferrable Interest Debenture Due 2035 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.3 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on May 27, 2015).
4.30	Indenture between Ameris Bancorp (as successor to Merchants & Southern Banks of Florida, Incorporated) and Wilmington Trust Company dated as of March 30, 2006 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.4 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on May 27, 2015).

- 4.31 First Supplemental Indenture dated as of May 22, 2015 by and among Ameris Bancorp, Merchants & Southern Banks of Florida, Incorporated and Wilmington Trust Company (pertaining to Indenture dated as of March 30, 2006) (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.5 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on May 27, 2015).
- 4.32 Form of Floating Rate Junior Subordinated Deferrable Interest Debenture Due 2036 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.6 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Commission on May 27, 2015).
- 10.1* Omnibus Stock Ownership and Long-Term Incentive Plan (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.17 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 25, 1998).
- 10.2* ABC Bancorp 2000 Officer/Director Stock Bonus Plan (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.19 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 29, 2000).
- 10.3* 2005 Omnibus Stock Ownership and Long-Term Incentive Plan (incorporated by reference to Appendix A to Ameris Bancorp's Definitive Proxy Statement filed with the SEC on April 18, 2005).
- 10.4* Form of Incentive Stock Option Agreement (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.2 to Ameris Bancorp's Registration Statement on Form S-8 filed with the SEC on January 24, 2006).
- 10.5* Form of Non-Qualified Stock Option Agreement (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.3 to Ameris Bancorp's Registration Statement on Form S-8 filed with the SEC on January 24, 2006).
- 10.6* Form of Restricted Stock Agreement (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.4 to Ameris Bancorp's Registration Statement on Form S-8 filed with the SEC on January 24, 2006).
- 10.7* Executive Employment Agreement with H. Richard Sturm dated as of May 31, 2007 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on June 6, 2007).
- 10.8* First Amendment to Executive Employment Agreement dated December 30, 2008, by and between Ameris Bancorp and H. Richard Sturm (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.6 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on December 30, 2008).
- 10.9* Supplemental Executive Retirement Agreement with Edwin W. Hortman, Jr., dated as of November 7, 2012 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Form 10-Q filed with the SEC on November 9, 2012).
- 10.10* Supplemental Executive Retirement Agreement with Dennis J. Zember Jr., dated as of November 7, 2012 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.2 to Ameris Bancorp's Form 10-Q filed with the SEC on November 9, 2012).
- 10.11* Supplemental Executive Retirement Agreement with Jon S. Edwards, dated as of November 7, 2012 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.3 to Ameris Bancorp's Form 10-Q filed with the SEC on November 9, 2012).
- 10.12* Supplemental Executive Retirement Agreement with Cindi H. Lewis, dated as of November 7, 2012 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.4 to Ameris Bancorp's Form 10-Q filed with the SEC on November 9, 2012).
- 10.13 Loan Agreement dated as of August 28, 2013 by and between Ameris Bancorp and NexBank SSB (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on August 29, 2013).
- 10.14 Revolving Promissory Note dated as of August 28, 2013 issued by Ameris Bancorp to NexBank SSB (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.2 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on August 29, 2013).
- 10.15 Pledge and Security Agreement dated as of August 28, 2013 by and between Ameris Bancorp and NexBank SSB (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.3 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on August 29, 2013).
- 10.16* Executive Employment Agreement by and between Ameris Bancorp and James A. LaHaise dated as of June 30, 2014 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Form 10-Q filed with the SEC on August 8, 2014).
- 10.17 First Amendment to Loan Agreement dated as of September 26, 2014 by and between Ameris Bancorp and NexBank SSB (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on September 29, 2014).
- 10.18 Amended and Restated Revolving Promissory Note dated as of September 26, 2014 issued by Ameris Bancorp to NexBank SSB (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.2 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on September 29, 2014).
- 10.19* Ameris Bancorp 2014 Omnibus Equity Compensation Plan (incorporated by reference to Appendix A to Ameris Bancorp's Definitive Proxy Statement filed with the SEC on April 17, 2014).
- 10.20* Form of Incentive Stock Option Grant Agreement (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 99.2 to Ameris Bancorp's Registration Statement on Form S-8 filed with the SEC on November 26, 2014).

- 10.21* Form of Nonqualified Stock Option Grant Agreement (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 99.3 to Ameris Bancorp's Registration Statement on Form S-8 filed with the SEC on November 26, 2014).
- 10.22* Form of Restricted Stock Grant Agreement (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 99.4 to Ameris Bancorp's Registration Statement on Form S-8 filed with the SEC on November 26, 2014).
- 10.23* Executive Employment Agreement by and among Ameris Bancorp, Ameris Bank and Edwin W. Hortman, Jr. dated as of December 15, 2014 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 99.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on December 18, 2014).
- 10.24* Executive Employment Agreement by and among Ameris Bancorp, Ameris Bank and Dennis J. Zember Jr. dated as of December 15, 2014 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 99.2 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on December 18, 2014).
- 10.25* Executive Employment Agreement by and among Ameris Bancorp, Ameris Bank and Andrew B. Cheney dated as of December 15, 2014 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 99.3 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on December 18, 2014).
- 10.26* Executive Employment Agreement by and among Ameris Bancorp, Ameris Bank and Jon S. Edwards dated as of December 15, 2014 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 99.4 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on December 18, 2014).
- 10.27* Executive Employment Agreement by and among Ameris Bancorp, Ameris Bank and Stephen A. Melton dated as of December 15, 2014 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 99.5 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on December 18, 2014).
- 10.28* Executive Employment Agreement by and among Ameris Bancorp, Ameris Bank and Cindi H. Lewis dated as of December 15, 2014 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 99.6 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on December 18, 2014).
- 10.29* Executive Employment Agreement by and among Ameris Bancorp, Ameris Bank and Lawton Bassett, III dated as of December 15, 2014.
- 21.1 Schedule of Subsidiaries of Ameris Bancorp.
- 23.1 Consent of Crowe Horwath LLP.
- 23.2 Consent of Porter Keadle Moore, LLC.
- 24.1 Power of Attorney relating to this Form 10-K is set forth on the signature pages of this Form 10-K.
- 31.1 Rule 13a-14(a)/15d-14(a) Certification by Chief Executive Officer.
- 31.2 Rule 13a-14(a)/15d-14(a) Certification by Chief Financial Officer.
- 32.1 Section 1350 Certification by Chief Executive Officer.
- 32.2 Section 1350 Certification by Chief Financial Officer.
- 101 The following financial statements from Ameris Bancorp's Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015, formatted as interactive data files in XBRL (eXtensible Business Reporting Language):
- (i) Consolidated Balance Sheets;
 - (ii) Consolidated Statements of Income;
 - (iii) Consolidated Statements of Comprehensive Income/(Loss);
 - (iv) Consolidated Statements of Changes in Stockholders' Equity;
 - (v) Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows; and
 - (vi) Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

* Management contract or a compensatory plan or arrangement.

INDEX TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND SCHEDULES

	<u>Page</u>
Reports of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firms	F-2
Management's Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting	F-4
Consolidated Balance Sheets – December 31, 2015 and 2014	F-5
Consolidated Statements of Income – Years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013	F-6
Consolidated Statements of Comprehensive Income – Years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013	F-7
Consolidated Statements of Changes in Stockholders' Equity – Years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013	F-8
Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows – Years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013	F-9
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements	F-11

REPORT OF INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM

To the Board of Directors and Stockholders
Ameris Bancorp

We have audited the accompanying balance sheets of Ameris Bancorp as of December 31, 2015 and 2014, and the related statements of income, comprehensive income, changes in stockholders' equity, and cash flows for each of the years in the two-year period ended December 31, 2015. We also have audited Ameris Bancorp's internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2015, based on criteria established in the 2013 Internal Control – Integrated Framework issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission. Ameris Bancorp's management is responsible for these financial statements, for maintaining effective internal control over financial reporting, and for its assessment of the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting, included in the accompanying Management's Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements and an opinion on the company's internal control over financial reporting based on our audits.

We conducted our audits in accordance with the standards of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (United States). Those standards require that we plan and perform the audits to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement and whether effective internal control over financial reporting was maintained in all material respects. Our audit of the financial statements included examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, and evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. Our audit of internal control over financial reporting included obtaining an understanding of internal control over financial reporting, assessing the risk that a material weakness exists, and testing and evaluating the design and operating effectiveness of internal control based on the assessed risk. Our audits also included performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our opinions.

A company's internal control over financial reporting is a process designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting and the preparation of financial statements for external purposes in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. A company's internal control over financial reporting includes those policies and procedures that (1) pertain to the maintenance of records that, in reasonable detail, accurately and fairly reflect the transactions and dispositions of the assets of the company; (2) provide reasonable assurance that transactions are recorded as necessary to permit preparation of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, and that receipts and expenditures of the company are being made only in accordance with authorizations of management and directors of the company; and (3) provide reasonable assurance regarding prevention or timely detection of unauthorized acquisition, use, or disposition of the company's assets that could have a material effect on the financial statements.

Because of its inherent limitations, internal control over financial reporting may not prevent or detect misstatements. Also, projections of any evaluation of effectiveness to future periods are subject to the risk that controls may become inadequate because of changes in conditions, or that the degree of compliance with the policies or procedures may deteriorate.

As permitted, Ameris Bancorp has excluded the operations of Merchants & Southern Banks of Florida, Incorporated acquired during 2015, which is described in Note 3 of the consolidated financial statements, from the scope of management's report on internal control over financial reporting. As such, it has also been excluded from the scope of our audit of internal control over financial reporting.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Ameris Bancorp as of December 31, 2015 and 2014, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for each of the years in the two-year period ended December 31, 2015 in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Also in our opinion, Ameris Bancorp maintained, in all material respects, effective internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2015, based on criteria established in the 2013 Internal Control – Integrated Framework issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission.

Crowe Horwath LLP

Atlanta, Georgia
February 29, 2016



REPORT OF INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM

To the Board of Directors and Stockholders
Ameris Bancorp

We have audited the accompanying consolidated statements of income, comprehensive income, changes in stockholders' equity, and cash flows of Ameris Bancorp and subsidiaries (the "Company") for the year ended December 31, 2013. These consolidated financial statements are the responsibility of the Company's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these consolidated financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with the standards of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (United States). Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit also includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, results of operations and cash flows of Ameris Bancorp and subsidiaries for the year ended December 31, 2013, in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Porter Keadle Moore, LLC

Atlanta, Georgia
March 14, 2014

MANAGEMENT'S REPORT ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL REPORTING

The management of Ameris Bancorp (the "Company") is responsible for establishing and maintaining adequate internal control over financial reporting as defined in Rules 13a-15(f) and 15d-15(f) under the Exchange Act. The Company's internal control over financial reporting is designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting and the preparation of financial statements for external purposes in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

All internal control systems, no matter how well designed, have inherent limitations. Therefore, even those systems determined to be effective can provide only reasonable assurance with respect to financial statement preparation and presentation.

Because of its inherent limitations, internal control over financial reporting may not prevent or detect misstatements. Also, projections of any evaluation of effectiveness to future periods are subject to the risk that controls may become inadequate because of changes in conditions or that the degree of compliance with the policies or procedures may deteriorate.

As permitted, the Company has excluded the operations of Merchants & Southern Banks of Florida, Incorporated acquired during 2015, which is described in Note 3 of the consolidated financial statements. The assets acquired in this acquisition and excluded from management's assessment on internal control over financial reporting comprised approximately 8.78% of total consolidated assets at December 31, 2015.

Management assessed the effectiveness of the Company's internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2015. In making this assessment, management used the criteria set forth by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (2013 framework) (COSO) in *Internal Control-Integrated Framework*. Based on this assessment and those criteria, management believes that the Company maintained effective internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2015.

Crowe Horwath LLP, the Company's independent auditors, has issued an attestation report on the effectiveness of the Company's internal control over financial reporting. That report is included in this Annual Report on page F-2.

/s/ Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.

Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.
President and
Chief Executive Officer

/s/ Dennis J. Zember, Jr.

Dennis J. Zember, Jr.
Executive Vice President and
Chief Financial Officer

AMERIS BANCORP AND SUBSIDIARIES
CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS
DECEMBER 31, 2015 AND 2014
(Dollars in Thousands, Except Share Data)

<u>Assets</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
Cash and due from banks	\$ 118,518	\$ 78,036
Interest-bearing deposits in banks	266,545	86,823
Federal funds sold	5,500	5,500
Investment securities available for sale, at fair value	783,185	541,805
Other investments	9,323	10,275
Mortgage loans held for sale, at fair value	111,182	94,759
Loans, net of unearned income	2,406,877	1,889,881
Purchased loans not covered by FDIC loss-sharing agreements (“purchased non-covered loans”)	771,554	674,239
Purchased loan pools not covered by FDIC loss-sharing agreements (“purchased loan pools”)	592,963	-
Purchased loans covered by FDIC loss-sharing agreements (“covered loans”)	137,529	271,279
Less: allowance for loan losses	(21,062)	(21,157)
Loans, net	<u>3,887,861</u>	<u>2,814,242</u>
Other real estate owned, net	16,147	33,160
Purchased, non-covered other real estate owned, net	14,333	15,585
Covered other real estate owned, net	5,011	19,907
Total other real estate owned, net	<u>35,491</u>	<u>68,652</u>
Premises and equipment, net	121,639	97,251
FDIC loss-share receivable, net	6,301	31,351
Other intangible assets, net	17,058	8,221
Goodwill	90,082	63,547
Cash value of bank owned life insurance	64,251	58,867
Other assets	72,004	77,748
Total assets	<u>\$ 5,588,940</u>	<u>\$ 4,037,077</u>
<u>Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity</u>		
Liabilities		
Deposits		
Noninterest-bearing	\$ 1,329,857	\$ 839,377
Interest-bearing	3,549,433	2,591,772
Total deposits	4,879,290	3,431,149
Securities sold under agreements to repurchase	63,585	73,310
Other borrowings	39,000	78,881
Subordinated deferrable interest debentures, net	69,874	65,325
Other liabilities	22,432	22,384
Total liabilities	<u>5,074,181</u>	<u>3,671,049</u>
Stockholders' equity		
Preferred stock, stated value \$1,000; 5,000,000 shares authorized; 0 shares issued and outstanding	-	-
Common stock, par value \$1; 100,000,000 shares authorized; 33,625,162 and 28,159,027 shares issued	33,625	28,159
Capital surplus	337,349	225,015
Retained earnings	152,820	118,412
Accumulated other comprehensive income (loss), net of tax	3,353	6,098
Treasury stock, at cost, 1,413,777 and 1,385,164 shares	(12,388)	(11,656)
Total stockholders' equity	<u>514,759</u>	<u>366,028</u>
Total liabilities and stockholders' equity	<u>\$ 5,588,940</u>	<u>\$ 4,037,077</u>

See Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

AMERIS BANCORP AND SUBSIDIARIES
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF INCOME
YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015, 2014 AND 2013
(Dollars in Thousands, Except Share Data)

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
Interest income			
Interest and fees on loans	\$ 171,567	\$ 150,611	\$ 117,497
Interest on taxable securities	16,134	12,086	7,134
Interest on nontaxable securities	1,869	1,626	1,413
Interest on deposits in other banks	790	236	276
Interest on federal funds sold	33	7	2
Total interest income	<u>190,393</u>	<u>164,566</u>	<u>126,322</u>
Interest expense			
Interest on deposits	9,752	9,488	8,400
Interest on other borrowings	5,104	5,192	1,737
Total interest expense	<u>14,856</u>	<u>14,680</u>	<u>10,137</u>
Net interest income	175,537	149,886	116,185
Provision for loan losses	<u>5,264</u>	<u>5,648</u>	<u>11,486</u>
Net interest income after provision for loan losses	<u>170,273</u>	<u>144,238</u>	<u>104,699</u>
Other income			
Service charges on deposit accounts	34,465	24,614	19,545
Mortgage banking activity	36,800	25,986	19,128
Other service charges, commissions and fees	3,754	2,647	2,151
Net gains on sales of securities	137	138	171
Gain on sale of SBA loans	4,522	3,896	1,500
Other noninterest income	5,908	5,555	4,054
Total noninterest income	<u>85,586</u>	<u>62,836</u>	<u>46,549</u>
Other expenses			
Salaries and employee benefits	94,003	73,878	56,670
Occupancy and equipment	21,195	17,521	12,286
Advertising and marketing	3,312	2,869	1,620
Amortization of intangible assets	3,741	2,330	1,414
Data processing and communications expenses	19,849	15,551	11,539
Credit resolution related expenses	17,707	13,506	15,486
Merger and conversion charges	7,980	3,940	4,350
FDIC insurance	3,475	2,972	2,323
Other noninterest expenses	27,853	18,302	16,257
Total noninterest expense	<u>199,115</u>	<u>150,869</u>	<u>121,945</u>
Income before income tax expense	56,744	56,205	29,303
Income tax expense	<u>(15,897)</u>	<u>(17,482)</u>	<u>(9,285)</u>
Net income	<u>40,847</u>	<u>38,723</u>	<u>20,018</u>
Preferred stock dividends	-	286	1,738
Net income available to common stockholders	<u>\$ 40,847</u>	<u>\$ 38,437</u>	<u>\$ 18,280</u>
Basic earnings per common share	<u>\$ 1.29</u>	<u>\$ 1.48</u>	<u>\$ 0.76</u>
Diluted earnings per common share	<u>\$ 1.27</u>	<u>\$ 1.46</u>	<u>\$ 0.75</u>
Dividends declared per common share	<u>\$ 0.20</u>	<u>\$ 0.15</u>	<u>\$ -</u>
Weighted average common shares outstanding			
Basic	31,762	25,974	23,918
Diluted	32,127	26,259	24,348

See Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

AMERIS BANCORP AND SUBSIDIARIES
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015, 2014 AND 2013
(Dollars in Thousands)

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
Net income	<u>\$40,847</u>	<u>\$38,723</u>	<u>\$ 20,018</u>
Other comprehensive income (loss):			
Net unrealized holding gain/(loss) arising during period on investment securities available for sale, net of tax (benefit) of (\$1,239), \$3,969 and (\$4,421)	(2,300)	7,371	(8,210)
Reclassification adjustment for gains on investment securities included in operations, net of tax of \$48, \$48 and \$60	(89)	(90)	(111)
Net unrealized gains (losses) on cash flow hedges during the period, net of tax (benefit) of (\$192), (\$479) and \$765	<u>(356)</u>	<u>(889)</u>	<u>1,420</u>
Total other comprehensive income (loss)	<u>(2,745)</u>	<u>6,392</u>	<u>(6,901)</u>
Comprehensive income	<u>\$43,592</u>	<u>\$ 45,115</u>	<u>\$ 13,117</u>

See Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

AMERIS BANCORP
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CHANGES IN STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY
(Dollars in Thousands, except share data)

	Year Ended December 31,					
	2015		2014		2013	
	Shares	Amount	Shares	Amount	Shares	Amount
PREFERRED STOCK						
Balance at beginning of period	-	\$ -	28,000	\$ 28,000	28,000	\$ 27,662
Repurchase of preferred stock	-	-	(28,000)	(28,000)	-	-
Accretion of fair value of warrant	-	-	-	-	-	338
Balance at end of period	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	28,000	\$ 28,000
COMMON STOCK						
Balance at beginning of period	28,159,027	\$ 28,159	26,461,769	\$ 26,462	25,154,818	\$ 25,155
Issuance of common stock	5,320,000	5,320	1,598,998	1,599	1,168,918	1,169
Issuance of restricted shares	71,000	71	77,047	77	108,400	108
Forfeitures of restricted shares	-	-	(10,571)	(11)	(4,000)	(4)
Exercise of stock options	75,135	75	31,784	32	33,633	34
Balance at end of period	33,625,162	\$ 33,625	28,159,027	\$ 28,159	26,461,769	\$ 26,462
CAPITAL SURPLUS						
Balance at beginning of period		\$ 225,015		\$ 189,722		\$ 164,949
Issuance of common stock		109,569		32,875		23,460
Stock-based compensation		1,485		2,057		1,041
Stock-based compensation net tax benefit		235		-		-
Exercise of stock options		1,116		427		376
Issuance of restricted shares		(71)		(77)		(108)
Forfeitures of restricted shares		-		11		4
Balance at end of period		\$ 337,349		\$ 225,015		\$ 189,722
RETAINED EARNINGS						
Balance at beginning of period		\$ 118,412		\$ 83,991		\$ 65,710
Net income		40,847		38,723		20,018
Dividends on preferred shares		-		(286)		(1,399)
Dividends on common shares		(6,439)		(4,016)		-
Accretion of fair value warrant		-		-		(338)
Balance at end of period		\$ 152,820		\$ 118,412		\$ 83,991
ACCUMULATED OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME (LOSS), NET OF TAX						
Unrealized gains on securities:						
Balance at beginning of period		\$ 5,590		\$ (1,691)		\$ 6,630
Change during period		(2,389)		7,281		(8,321)
Balance at end of period		\$ 3,201		\$ 5,590		\$ (1,691)
Unrealized gain on interest rate swap:						
Balance at beginning of period		\$ 508		\$ 1,397		\$ (23)
Change during period		(356)		(889)		1,420
Balance at end of period		\$ 152		\$ 508		\$ 1,397
Balance at end of period		\$ 3,353		\$ 6,098		\$ (294)
TREASURY STOCK						
Balance at beginning of period	1,385,164	\$ (11,656)	1,363,342	\$ (11,182)	1,355,050	\$ (11,066)
Purchase of treasury shares	28,613	(732)	21,822	(474)	8,292	(116)
Balance at end of period	1,413,777	\$ (12,388)	1,385,164	\$ (11,656)	1,363,342	\$ (11,182)
TOTAL STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY		\$ 514,759		\$ 366,028		\$ 316,699

See Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

AMERIS BANCORP AND SUBSIDIARIES
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS
YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015, 2014 AND 2013
(Dollars in Thousands)

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Net income	\$ 40,847	\$ 38,723	\$ 20,018
Adjustments to reconcile net income to net cash provided by operating activities:			
Depreciation	8,058	6,642	4,938
Amortization of intangible assets	3,741	2,330	1,414
Net amortization of investment securities available for sale	5,881	3,666	3,191
Net gains on securities available for sale	(137)	(138)	(171)
Stock based compensation expense	1,485	2,057	1,041
Net (gains) losses on sale or disposal of premises and equipment	184	(516)	(55)
Net write-downs and losses on sale of other real estate owned	15,696	4,950	9,162
Provision for loan losses	5,264	5,648	11,486
Accretion of discount on covered loans	(9,658)	(22,188)	(42,208)
Accretion of discount on purchased non-covered loans	(10,590)	(9,745)	-
Changes in FDIC loss-share receivable, net of cash payments received	5,777	11,596	25,461
Increase in cash surrender value of BOLI	(1,384)	(1,623)	(1,223)
Provision for deferred taxes	(344)	6,516	3,543
(Increase)/decrease in interest receivable	(4,251)	(1,952)	(1,395)
Increase/(decrease) in interest payable	(327)	(49)	199
Increase/(decrease) in taxes payable	9,033	(7,221)	(1,420)
Originations of mortgage loans held for sale	(1,038,691)	(687,090)	(525,376)
Proceeds from sales of mortgage loans held for sale	991,310	695,429	524,559
Net gains on mortgage loans held for sale	(40,389)	(28,532)	(17,675)
Originations of SBA loans	(54,594)	(58,089)	(12,486)
Proceeds from sales of SBA loans	39,484	32,782	15,754
Net gains on sale of SBA loans	(4,522)	(3,896)	(1,500)
Decrease in prepaid FDIC assessments	-	-	2,843
Change attributable to other operating activities	12,904	5,104	1,749
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	<u>(25,223)</u>	<u>(5,596)</u>	<u>21,849</u>
INVESTING ACTIVITIES, net of effects of business combinations			
Purchases of securities available for sale	(249,115)	(126,909)	(90,033)
Proceeds from maturities of securities available for sale	89,030	51,215	50,490
Proceeds from sale of securities available for sale	72,528	94,051	36,669
(Increase)/decrease in restricted equity securities, net	1,824	8,028	(1,269)
Net increase in loans, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans	(413,775)	(251,955)	(183,731)
Purchase of loan pools	(622,533)	-	-
Payments received on purchased non-covered loans	154,666	74,931	943
Payments received on covered loans	79,372	102,996	120,155
Purchase of premises and equipment	(12,576)	(5,709)	(5,634)
Proceeds from sale of premises and equipment	244	1,213	2,114
Purchase of bank owned life insurance	(4,000)	-	(30,000)
Proceeds from sale of other real estate owned	43,269	43,793	68,917
Payments received from FDIC under loss-sharing agreements	19,273	22,494	68,822
Net cash proceeds received from acquisitions	673,933	17,022	25,810
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities	<u>(167,860)</u>	<u>31,170</u>	<u>63,253</u>

AMERIS BANCORP AND SUBSIDIARIES
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS
YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015, 2014 AND 2013
(Dollars in Thousands)

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
FINANCING ACTIVITIES, net of effects of business combinations			
Net increase (decrease) in deposits	353,984	62,894	(99,115)
Net increase (decrease) in securities sold under agreements to repurchase	(9,725)	(15,634)	11,866
Repayment of other borrowings	(39,881)	(257,060)	(177,741)
Proceeds from other borrowings	-	118,963	175,000
Dividends paid - preferred stock	-	(286)	(1,400)
Dividends paid - common stock	(6,439)	(4,016)	-
Redemption of preferred stock	-	(28,000)	-
Issuance of common stock	114,889	-	-
Proceeds from exercise of stock options	1,191	459	410
Purchase of treasury shares	(732)	(474)	(116)
	<u>413,287</u>	<u>(123,154)</u>	<u>(91,096)</u>
Net increase (decrease) in cash and due from banks	220,204	(97,580)	(5,994)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of period	170,359	267,939	273,933
Cash and cash equivalents at end of period	<u>\$ 390,563</u>	<u>\$ 170,359</u>	<u>\$ 267,939</u>

SUPPLEMENTAL DISCLOSURES OF CASH FLOW INFORMATION

Cash paid during the year for:			
Interest	\$ 15,183	\$ 14,667	\$ 9,938
Income taxes	\$ 5,828	\$ 19,281	\$ 16,925
Loans (excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans) transferred to other real estate owned	\$ 11,261	\$ 11,972	\$ 9,137
Purchased non-covered loans transferred to other real estate owned	\$ 4,473	\$ 4,160	\$ -
Covered loans transferred to other real estate owned	\$ 7,910	\$ 13,650	\$ 31,833
Loans transferred from mortgage loans available for sale to loans	\$ 71,347	\$ -	\$ -
Loans provided for the sales of other real estate owned	\$ 4,826	\$ 1,109	\$ 2,416
Assets acquired in business combinations	\$1,169,990	\$ 448,971	\$ 745,027
Liabilities assumed in business combinations	\$1,099,988	\$ 411,701	\$ 720,236
Issuance of common stock in acquisitions	\$ -	\$ 34,474	\$ 24,629
Change in unrealized gain (loss) on securities available for sale, net	\$ (2,389)	\$ 7,281	\$ (8,321)
Change in unrealized gain on cash flow hedge (interest rate swap), net	\$ (356)	\$ (889)	\$ 1,420

See Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

AMERIS BANCORP AND SUBSIDIARIES
NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

NOTE 1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Nature of Business

Ameris Bancorp (the “Company”) is a financial holding company whose primary business is presently conducted by Ameris Bank, its wholly owned banking subsidiary (the “Bank”). Through the Bank, the Company operates a full service banking business and offers a broad range of retail and commercial banking services to its customers concentrated in select markets in Georgia, Alabama, Florida and South Carolina. The Company also engages in mortgage banking activities and SBA lending, and, as such, acquires, sells and services one-to-four family residential mortgage loans and SBA loans in the Southeast. The Company and the Bank are subject to the regulations of certain federal and state agencies and are periodically examined by those regulatory agencies.

Basis of Presentation and Accounting Estimates

The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of the Company and its subsidiaries. Significant intercompany transactions and balances have been eliminated in consolidation.

In preparing the consolidated financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, management is required to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities as of the date of the balance sheet and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Acquisition Accounting

Acquisitions are accounted for under the acquisition method of accounting. Purchased assets and assumed liabilities are recorded at their estimated fair values as of the purchase date. Any identifiable intangible assets are also recorded at fair value. When the fair value of the assets purchased exceeds the fair value of liabilities assumed, it results in a “bargain purchase gain.” If the consideration given exceeds the fair value of the net assets received, goodwill is recognized. Fair values are subject to refinement for up to one year after the closing date of an acquisition as information relative to closing date fair values becomes available.

All identifiable intangible assets that are acquired in a business combination are recognized at fair value on the acquisition date. Identifiable intangible assets are recognized separately if they arise from contractual or other legal rights or if they are separable (i.e., capable of being sold, transferred, licensed, rented, or exchanged separately from the entity). Because deposit liabilities and the related customer relationship intangible assets may be exchanged in a sale or exchange transaction, the intangible asset associated with the depositor relationship is considered identifiable.

Purchased loans acquired in a business combination are recorded at estimated fair value on their purchase date and prohibit the carryover of the related allowance for loan losses. When the loans have evidence of credit deterioration since origination and it is probable at the date of acquisition that the Company will not collect all contractually required principal and interest payments, the difference between contractually required payments at acquisition and the cash flows expected to be collected at acquisition is referred to as the non-accretable discount. The Company must estimate expected cash flows at each reporting date. Subsequent decreases to the expected cash flows will generally result in a provision for loan losses. Subsequent increases in expected cash flows result in a reversal of the provision for loan losses to the extent of prior provisions and adjust accretable discount if no prior provisions have been made. This increase in accretable discount will have a positive impact on interest income.

Cash, Due from Banks and Cash Flows

For purposes of reporting cash flows, cash and due from banks includes cash on hand, cash items in process of collection and amounts due from banks. The Bank is required to maintain reserve balances in cash or on deposit with the Federal Reserve Bank. The total of the average daily required reserve was approximately \$27.8 million and \$20.1 million for the years ended 2015 and 2014, respectively. Net cash flows are reported for customer loan and deposit transactions, interest bearing deposits in other financial institutions, and federal funds purchased and repurchase agreements.

Securities

The Company classifies its securities in one of three categories: (i) held to maturity, (ii) available for sale or (iii) trading. Trading securities are bought and held principally for the purpose of selling them in the near term. Held to maturity securities are those securities for which the Company has the ability and intent to hold until maturity. All other securities are classified as available for sale. At December 31, 2015 and 2014, all securities were classified as available for sale.

Held to maturity securities are recorded at cost, adjusted for the amortization or accretion of premiums or discounts. Trading securities are bought and held principally for the purpose of selling them in the near term. Available for sale securities are recorded at fair value. Unrealized holding gains and losses, net of the related tax effect, on available for sale securities are excluded from net income and are reported in other comprehensive income as a separate component of shareholders' equity until realized. Transfers of securities between categories are recorded at fair value at the date of transfer. Unrealized holding gains or losses associated with transfers of securities from held to maturity to available for sale are recorded as a separate component of shareholders' equity. These unrealized holding gains or losses are amortized into income over the remaining life of the security as an adjustment to the yield in a manner consistent with the amortization or accretion of the original purchase premium or discount on the associated security.

The amortization of premiums and accretion of discounts are recognized in interest income using methods approximating the interest method over the life of the securities. Realized gains and losses, determined on the basis of the cost of specific securities sold, are included in earnings on the trade date. A decline in the market value of any available for sale or held to maturity investment below cost that is deemed other than temporary is charged to earnings and establishes a new cost basis for the security for the decline in value deemed to be credit related. The decline in value attributed to non-credit-related factors is recognized in other comprehensive income.

In determining whether other-than-temporary impairment losses exist, management considers (i) the length of time and the extent to which the fair value has been less than cost, (ii) the financial condition and near-term prospects of the issuer and (iii) the Company's intent to sell the security and whether it is more likely than not that the Company would be required to sell the security prior to its anticipated recovery or maturity.

Other Investments

Other investments include Federal Home Loan Bank ("FHLB") and Federal Reserve Bank stock. The investments do not have readily determinable fair values and are carried at cost. They are periodically evaluated for impairment based on ultimate recovery of par value. Both cash and stock dividends are reported as income.

Mortgage Loans Held-for-Sale

Mortgage loans held-for-sale are carried at the estimated fair value, as determined by outstanding commitments from third party investors in the secondary market. Adjustments to reflect unrealized gains and losses resulting from changes in fair value of mortgage loans held-for-sale and realized gains and losses upon ultimate sale of the loans are classified as mortgage banking activity in the Consolidated Statements of Income.

Servicing Rights

When mortgage and SBA loans are sold with servicing retained, servicing rights are initially recorded at fair value with the income statement effect recorded in mortgage banking activity and gains on sales of SBA loans. Fair value is based on market prices for comparable mortgage servicing contracts, when available or alternatively, is based on a valuation model that calculates the present value of estimated future net servicing income. All classes of servicing assets are subsequently measured using the amortization method which requires servicing rights to be amortized into non-interest income in proportion to, and over the period of, the estimated future net servicing income of the underlying loans.

Servicing rights are evaluated for impairment based upon the fair value of the rights as compared to carrying amount. Impairment is determined by stratifying rights into groupings based on predominant risk characteristics, such as interest rate, loan type and investor type. Impairment is recognized through a valuation allowance for an individual grouping, to the extent that fair value is less than the carrying amount. If the Company later determines that all or a portion of the impairment no longer exists for a particular grouping, a reduction of the allowance may be recorded as an increase to income. Changes in valuation allowances are reported with "Mortgage banking activity" on the income statement. The fair values of servicing rights are subject to significant fluctuations as a result of changes in estimated and actual prepayment speeds and default rates and losses.

Servicing fee income, which is reported on the income statement as "Other noninterest income", is recorded for fees earned for servicing loans. The fees are based on a contractual percentage of the outstanding principal; or a fixed amount per loan and are recorded as income when earned. The amortization of servicing rights is netted against loan servicing fee income. Servicing fees totaled \$1,268,000, \$1,011,000 and \$611,000 for the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, respectively. Late fees and ancillary fees related to loan servicing are not material.

Loans

Loans, excluding loans covered by FDIC loss-sharing agreements (“covered loans”), purchased loans not covered by FDIC loss-sharing agreements (“purchased non-covered loans”) and purchased loan pools not covered by FDIC loss-sharing agreements (“purchased loan pools”) are reported at their outstanding principal balances less unearned income, net of deferred fees and origination costs and the allowance for loan losses. Interest income is accrued on the outstanding principal balance. For all classes of loans, the accrual of interest on loans is discontinued when, in management’s opinion, the borrower may be unable to make payments as they become due, unless the loan is well secured and in the process of collection. Interest income on mortgage and commercial loans is discontinued and placed on non-accrual status at the time the loan is 90 days delinquent unless the loan is well secured and in process of collection. Mortgage loans and commercial loans are charged off to the extent principal or interest is deemed uncollectible. Consumer loans continue to accrue interest until they are charged off, generally between 90 and 120 days past due, unless the loan is in the process of collection. Non-accrual loans and loans past due 90 days still on accrual include both smaller balance homogeneous loans that are collectively evaluated for impairment and individually classified impaired loans. All interest accrued, but not collected for loans that are placed on nonaccrual or charged off, is reversed against interest income. Interest income on nonaccrual loans is applied against principal until the loans are returned to accrual status. Loans are returned to accrual status when all the principal and interest amounts contractually due are brought current and future payments are reasonably assured.

Purchased Loans

Purchased loans include loans acquired in FDIC-assisted acquisitions (“covered loans”) and other acquisitions (“purchased non-covered loans”) and are initially recorded at fair value on the date of the purchase. Purchased loans that contain evidence of credit deterioration (“purchased credit impaired loans”) on the date of purchase are carried at the net present value of expected future proceeds. All other purchased loans are recorded at their initial fair value, adjusted for subsequent advances, pay downs, amortization or accretion of any premium or discount on purchase, charge-offs and any other adjustment to carrying value. There is no carryover of the seller’s allowance for loan losses. After acquisition, losses are recognized by recording a charge-off of the loss and a corresponding provision expense.

In determining the initial fair value of purchased loans without evidence of credit deterioration at the date of acquisition, management includes (i) no carryover of any previously recorded ALLL and (ii) an adjustment of the recorded investment to reflect an appropriate market rate of interest, given the risk profile and grade assigned to each loan. This adjustment is accreted into earnings as a yield adjustment, using methods approximating the effective yield method, over the remaining life of each loan.

Purchased credit impaired loans are accounted for individually. The Company estimates the amount and timing of expected cash flows for each loan, and the expected cash flows in excess of the amount paid is recorded as interest income over the remaining life of the loan (accretable yield). The excess of the loan’s contractual principal and interest over expected cash flows is not recorded (nonaccretable difference).

Over the life of the loan, expected cash flows continue to be estimated. If the present value of expected cash flows is less than the carrying amount, a loss is recorded as a provision for loan losses. If the present value of expected cash flows is greater than the carrying amount, it is recognized as part of future interest income.

Purchased Loan Pools

Purchased loan pools include groups of loans that were not acquired in bank acquisitions or FDIC-assisted transactions (“purchased loan pools”). Purchased loan pools are reported at their outstanding principal balances plus purchase premiums, net of accumulated amortization. Interest income is accrued on the outstanding principal balance. The accrual of interest on loans is discontinued when, in management’s opinion, the borrower may be unable to make payments as they become due, unless the loan is well secured and in the process of collection.

Allowance for Loan Losses

The allowance for loan losses is established through a provision for loan losses charged to expense. Loan losses are charged against the allowance when management believes the collection of a loan’s principal is unlikely. Subsequent recoveries are credited to the allowance.

The allowance is an amount that management believes will be adequate to absorb estimated losses relating to specifically identified loans, as well as probable incurred losses in the balance of the loan portfolio. The allowance for loan losses is evaluated on a regular basis by management and is based upon management’s periodic review of various risks in the loan portfolio highlighted by historical experience, the nature and volume of the loan portfolio, overall portfolio quality, review of specific problem loans, current economic conditions that may affect the borrower’s ability to pay, estimated value of any underlying collateral and prevailing economic conditions. This evaluation is inherently subjective as it requires estimates that are susceptible to significant revision as more information becomes available.

The allowance for loan losses evaluation does not include the effects of expected losses on specific loans or groups of loans that are related to future events or expected changes in economic conditions. While management uses the best information available to make its evaluation, future adjustments to the allowance may be necessary if there are significant changes in economic conditions. In addition, regulatory agencies, as an integral part of their examination process, periodically review the Bank's allowance for loan losses and may require the Bank to make additions to the allowance based on their judgment about information available to them at the time of their examinations.

The allowance consists of specific and general components. The specific component includes loans management considers impaired and other loans or groups of loans that management has classified with higher risk characteristics. For such loans that are classified as impaired, an allowance is established when the discounted cash flows, collateral value or observable market price of the impaired loan is lower than the carrying value of that loan. The general component covers non-classified loans and is based on historical loss experience adjusted for qualitative factors.

The allowance for loan losses represents a reserve for probable incurred losses in the loan portfolio. The adequacy of the allowance for loan losses is evaluated periodically based on a review of all significant loans, with a particular emphasis on non-accruing, past due and other loans that management believes might be potentially impaired or warrant additional attention. The Company segregates the loan portfolio by type of loan and utilizes this segregation in evaluating exposure to risks within the portfolio. In addition, based on internal reviews and external reviews performed by independent loan reviewers and regulatory authorities, the Company further segregates the loan portfolio by loan grades based on an assessment of risk for a particular loan or group of loans. In establishing allowances, management considers historical loan loss experience but adjusts this data with a significant emphasis on data such as risk ratings, current loan quality trends, current economic conditions and other factors in the markets where the Company operates. Factors considered include, among others, current valuations of real estate in their markets, unemployment rates, the effect of weather conditions on agricultural related entities and other significant local economic events.

The Company has developed a methodology for determining the adequacy of the allowance for loan losses which is monitored by the Company's Chief Credit Officer. Procedures provide for the assignment of a risk rating for every loan included in the total loan portfolio, with the exception of warehouse lines of credit and overdraft protection loans which are treated as pools for risk rating purposes. The risk rating schedule provides nine ratings of which five ratings are classified as pass ratings and four ratings are classified as criticized ratings. Each risk rating is assigned a percentage factor of historical losses, calculated by loan type, to be applied to the balance of loans by risk rating and type, to determine the adequate amount of reserve. Many of the larger loans require an annual review by an independent loan officer or an independent third party loan review firm. As a result of these loan reviews, certain loans may be assigned specific reserve allocations. Assigned risk ratings can be adjusted based on the number of days past due. The calculation of the allowance for loan losses, including underlying data and assumptions, is reviewed regularly by the independent internal loan review department.

Loan losses are charged against the allowance when management believes the collection of a loan's principal is unlikely. Subsequent recoveries are credited to the allowance. Consumer loans are charged-off in accordance with the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council's ("FFIEC") Uniform Retail Credit Classification and Account Management Policy. Commercial loans are charged-off when they are deemed uncollectible, which usually involves a triggering event within the collection effort. If the loan is collateral dependent, the loss is more easily identified and is charged-off when it is identified, usually based upon receipt of an appraisal. However, when a loan has guarantor support, and the guarantor demonstrates willingness and capacity to support the debt, the Company may carry the estimated loss as a reserve against the loan while collection efforts with the guarantor are pursued. If, after collection efforts with the guarantor are complete, the deficiency is still considered uncollectible, the loss is charged-off and any further collections are treated as recoveries. In all situations, when a loan is downgraded to an Asset Quality Rating of 60 (Loss per the regulatory guidance), the uncollectible portion is charged-off.

Premises and Equipment

Land is carried at cost. Other premises and equipment are carried at cost, less accumulated depreciation computed on the straight-line method over the estimated useful lives of the assets. In general, estimated lives for buildings are up to 40 years, furniture and equipment useful lives range from three to 20 years and the lives of software and computer related equipment range from three to five years. Leasehold improvements are amortized over the life of the related lease, or the related assets, whichever is shorter. Expenditures for major improvements of the Company's premises and equipment are capitalized and depreciated over their estimated useful lives. Minor repairs, maintenance and improvements are charged to operations as incurred. When assets are sold or disposed of, their cost and related accumulated depreciation are removed from the accounts and any gain or loss is reflected in earnings.

FDIC Loss-Share Receivable

In connection with the Company's FDIC-assisted acquisitions, the Company has recorded an FDIC loss-share receivable to reflect the indemnification provided by the FDIC. Since the indemnified items are covered loans and covered foreclosed assets, which are initially measured at fair value, the FDIC loss-share receivable is also initially measured and recorded at fair value, and is calculated by discounting the cash flows expected to be received from the FDIC. These cash flows are estimated by multiplying estimated losses by the reimbursement rates as set forth in the loss-sharing agreements. The balance of the FDIC loss-share receivable and the accretion (or amortization) thereof is adjusted periodically to reflect changes in expectations of discounted cash flows, expense reimbursements under the loss-sharing agreements and other factors. The Company is accreting (or amortizing) its FDIC loss-share receivable over the shorter of the contractual term of the indemnification agreement (ten years for the single family loss-sharing agreements, and five years for the non-single family loss-sharing agreements) or the remaining life of the indemnified asset.

Pursuant to the clawback provisions of the loss-sharing agreements for the Company's FDIC-assisted acquisitions, the Company may be required to reimburse the FDIC should actual losses be less than certain thresholds established in each loss-sharing agreement. The amount of the clawback provision for each acquisition is measured and recorded at fair value. It is calculated as the difference between management's estimated losses on covered loans and covered foreclosed assets and the loss threshold contained in each loss-sharing agreement, multiplied by the applicable clawback provisions contained in each loss-sharing agreement. This clawback amount, which is payable to the FDIC upon termination of the applicable loss-sharing agreement, is then discounted back to net present value, generally over ten years. To the extent that actual losses on covered loans and covered foreclosed assets are less than estimated losses, the applicable clawback payable to the FDIC upon termination of the loss-sharing agreements will increase. To the extent that actual losses on covered loans and covered foreclosed assets are more than estimated losses, the applicable clawback payable to the FDIC upon termination of the loss-sharing agreements will decrease. The balance of the FDIC clawback payable and the amortization thereof are adjusted periodically to reflect changes in expected losses on covered assets and the impact of such changes on the clawback payable and other factors. The FDIC loss-share receivable is reported net of the clawback liability.

Goodwill and Intangible Assets

Goodwill represents the excess of cost over the fair value of the net assets purchased in business combinations. Goodwill is required to be tested annually for impairment or whenever events occur that may indicate that the recoverability of the carrying amount is not probable. In the event of an impairment, the amount by which the carrying amount exceeds the fair value is charged to earnings. The Company performs its annual test of impairment in the fourth quarter of each year.

Intangible assets consist of core deposit premiums acquired in connection with business combinations and are based on the established value of acquired customer deposits. The core deposit premium is initially recognized based on a valuation performed as of the consummation date and is amortized over an estimated useful life of five to seven years. Amortization periods are reviewed annually in connection with the annual impairment testing of goodwill.

Cash Value of Bank Owned Life Insurance

The Company has purchased life insurance policies on certain officers. The life insurance is recorded at the amount that can be realized under the insurance contract at the balance sheet date, which is the cash surrender value adjusted for other charges or other amounts due that are probable at settlement.

Other Real Estate Owned

Foreclosed assets acquired through or in lieu of loan foreclosure are held for sale and are initially recorded at fair value less estimated cost to sell. Any write-down to fair value at the time of transfer to foreclosed assets is charged to the allowance for loan losses. Subsequent to foreclosure, valuations are periodically performed by management and the assets are carried at the lower of carrying amount or fair value less cost to sell. Costs of improvements are capitalized up to the fair value of the property, whereas costs relating to holding foreclosed assets and subsequent adjustments to the value are charged to operations.

Income Taxes

Deferred income tax assets and liabilities are determined using the liability method. Under this method, the net deferred tax asset or liability is determined based on the tax effects of the temporary differences between the book and tax bases of the various balance sheet assets and liabilities and gives current recognition to changes in tax rates and laws.

In the event the future tax consequences of differences between the financial reporting bases and the tax bases of the assets and liabilities results in deferred tax assets, an evaluation of the probability of being able to realize the future benefits indicated by such assets is required. A valuation allowance is provided for the portion of the deferred tax asset when it is more likely than not that some portion or all of the deferred tax asset will not be realized. In assessing the realizability of the deferred tax assets, management considers the scheduled reversals of deferred tax liabilities, projected future taxable income and tax planning strategies.

The Company currently evaluates income tax positions judged to be uncertain. A loss contingency reserve is accrued if it is probable that the tax position will be challenged with a tax examination being presumed to occur, it is probable that the future resolution of the challenge will confirm that a loss has been incurred, and the amount of such loss can be reasonably estimated.

The Company recognizes interest and penalties related to income tax matters in other noninterest expenses.

Stock-Based Compensation

The Company accounts for its stock compensation plans using a fair value based method whereby compensation cost is measured at the grant date based on the value of the award and is recognized over the service period, which is usually the vesting period. The Company recorded approximately \$1.5 million, \$2.1 million and \$1.0 million of stock-based compensation cost in 2015, 2014 and 2013, respectively.

Treasury Stock

The Company's repurchases of shares of its common stock are recorded at cost as treasury stock and result in a reduction of stockholders' equity.

Earnings Per Share

Basic earnings per common share are computed using the two-class method. Basic earnings per share are computed by dividing net income allocated to common stockholders by the weighted-average number of shares of common stock outstanding during the year. Diluted earnings per common share are computed by dividing net income allocated to common shareholders by the effect of the issuance of potential common shares that are dilutive and by the sum of the weighted-average number of shares of common stock outstanding. Potential common shares consist of stock options and restricted shares for the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014, and are determined using the treasury stock method. The Company has determined that its outstanding non-vested stock awards are participating securities, and all dividends on these awards are paid similar to other dividends.

Presented below is a summary of the components used to calculate basic and diluted earnings per share:

	Years Ended December 31,		
	2015	2014	2013
	(Dollars in Thousands)		
Distributed earnings allocated to common stockholders	\$ 6,439	\$ 4,016	\$ -
Undistributed earnings allocated to common stockholders	34,408	34,421	18,280
Net income available to common shareholders	<u>\$40,847</u>	<u>\$38,437</u>	<u>\$18,280</u>
Weighted average number of common shares outstanding	31,762	25,974	23,918
Effect of dilutive restricted grants	244	15	378
Effect of dilutive options	121	270	169
Weighted average number of common shares outstanding used to calculate diluted earnings per share	<u>32,127</u>	<u>26,259</u>	<u>24,465</u>

For the year ended December 31, 2015, the Company has not excluded any potential common shares with strike prices that would cause them to be anti-dilutive. For the years ended December 31, 2014 and 2013, the Company has excluded 6,000 and 324,000, respectively, potential common shares with strike prices that would cause them to be anti-dilutive.

Derivative Instruments and Hedging Activities

The goal of the Company's interest rate risk management process is to minimize the volatility in the net interest margin caused by changes in interest rates. Derivative instruments are used to hedge certain assets or liabilities as a part of this process. The Company is required to recognize certain contracts and commitments as derivatives when the characteristics of those contracts and commitments meet the definition of a derivative. All derivative instruments are required to be carried at fair value on the balance sheet.

The Company's current hedging strategies involve utilizing an interest rate swap classified as a cash flow hedge. Cash flows related to floating-rate liabilities will fluctuate with changes in an underlying rate index. When effectively hedged, the increases or decreases in cash flows related to the floating rate liability will generally be offset by changes in cash flows of the derivative instrument designated as a hedge. The fair value of derivatives is recognized as assets or liabilities in the financial statements. The accounting for the changes in the fair value of a derivative depends on the intended use of the derivative instrument at inception. The change in fair value of the effective portion of cash flow hedges is accounted for in other comprehensive income rather than net income.

The Company had a cash flow hedge with notional amount of \$37.1 million at December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013 for the purpose of converting the variable rate on the junior subordinated debentures to a fixed rate. The fair value of this instrument amounted to a liability of approximately \$1,439,000 and \$1,315,000 as of December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively. No material hedge ineffectiveness from cash flow hedges was recognized in the statement of income. All components of each derivative's gain or loss are included in the assessment of hedge effectiveness.

Mortgage Banking Derivatives

The Company maintains a risk management program to manage interest rate risk and pricing risk associated with its mortgage lending activities. Commitments to fund mortgage loans (interest rate locks) to be sold into the secondary market and forward commitments for the future delivery of these mortgage loans are accounted for as free standing derivatives. The fair value of the interest rate lock is recorded at the time the commitment to fund the mortgage loan is executed and is adjusted for the expected exercise of the commitment before the loan is funded. In order to hedge the change in interest rates resulting from its commitments to fund the loans, the Company enters into forward commitments for the future delivery of mortgage loans when interest rate locks are entered into. Fair values of these mortgage derivatives are estimated based on changes in mortgage interest rates from the date the interest on the loan is locked. Changes in the fair values of these derivatives are included in mortgage banking activity. The fair value of these instruments amounted to an asset of approximately \$2,687,000 and \$1,757,000 at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively, and a derivative liability of approximately \$137,000 and \$249,000 at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively.

Comprehensive Income

The Company's comprehensive income consists of net income, changes in the net unrealized holding gains and losses of securities available for sale, unrealized gain or loss on the effective portion of the cash flow hedge and the realized gain or loss recognized due to the sale or unwind of cash flow hedge prior to their contractual maturity date. These amounts are carried in accumulated other comprehensive income (loss) on the consolidated statements of stockholders' equity and are presented net of taxes.

Fair Value of Financial Instruments

Fair values of financial instruments are estimated using relevant market information and other assumptions, as more fully disclosed in a separate note. Fair value estimates involve uncertainties and matters of significant judgment regarding interest rates, credit risk, prepayments, and other factors, especially in the absence of broad markets for particular items. Changes in assumptions or in market conditions could significantly affect these estimates.

Operating Segments

The Company has four reportable segments, the Banking Division, the Retail Mortgage Division, the Warehouse Lending Division and the SBA Division. The Banking Division derives its revenues from the delivery of full service financial services to include commercial loans, consumer loans and deposit accounts. The Retail Mortgage Division derives its revenues from the origination, sales and servicing of one-to-four family residential mortgage loans. The Warehouse Lending Division derives its revenues from the origination and servicing of warehouse lines to other businesses that are secured by underlying one-to-four family residential mortgage loans. The SBA Division derives its revenues from the origination, sales and servicing of SBA loans. The Banking, Retail Mortgage, Warehouse Lending and SBA Divisions are managed as separate business units because of the different products and services they provide. The Company evaluates performance and allocates resources based on profit or loss from operations. There are no material intersegment sales or transfers.

New Accounting Standards

ASU 2015-16 – *Business Combinations (Topic 805) - Simplifying the Accounting for Measurement-Period Adjustments* (“ASU 2015-16”). ASU 2015-16 requires that an acquirer recognize adjustments to estimated amounts that are identified during the measurement period in the reporting period in which the adjustment amounts are determined. The amendments require that the acquirer record, in the same period's financial statements, the effect on earnings of changes in depreciation, amortization, or other income effects, if any, as a result of the change to the estimated amounts, calculated as if the accounting had been completed at the acquisition date. The standard also requires an entity to present separately on the face of the income statement or disclose in the notes the portion of the amount recorded in current-period earnings by line item that would have been recorded in previous reporting periods if the adjustment to the estimated amounts had been recognized as of the acquisition date. ASU 2015-16 is effective for public business entities for fiscal years beginning after December 15, 2015, including interim periods within those fiscal years. The amendments should be applied prospectively to adjustments to provisional amounts that occur after the effective date with earlier application permitted for financial statements that have not been issued. The Company has early adopted the provisions of this amendment and the adoption did not have a material impact on the Company's consolidated financial statements.

ASU 2015-03 – *Interest – Imputation of Interest* (“ASU 2015-03”). ASU 2015-03 simplifies presentation of debt issuance costs by requiring that debt issuance costs related to a recognized debt liability be presented in the balance sheet as a direct deduction from the carrying amount of the debt liability, consistent with debt discounts. ASU 2015-03 is effective for annual periods and interim periods within those annual periods beginning after December 15, 2015, and early adoption is permitted. It should be applied on a retrospective basis. The Company is currently evaluating the impact this standard will have on the Company’s financial position or disclosures, but it is not expected to have a material impact.

ASU 2015-02 – *Consolidation (Topic 810) - Amendments to the Consolidation Analysis* (“ASU 2015-02”). ASU 2015-02 includes amendments that are intended to improve targeted areas of consolidation for legal entities including reducing the number of consolidation models from four to two and simplifying the FASB Accounting Standards Codification. ASU 2015-02 is effective for annual and interim periods within those annual periods, beginning after December 15, 2015. The amendments may be applied retrospectively in previously issued financial statements for one or more years with a cumulative effect adjustment to retained earnings as of the beginning of the first year restated. Early adoption is permitted, including adoption in an interim period. The Company is currently evaluating the impact this standard will have on the Company’s results of operations, financial position or disclosures, but it is not expected to have a material impact.

ASU 2015-01 – *Income Statement – Extraordinary and Unusual Items* (“ASU 2015-01”). ASU 2015-01 eliminates the concept of extraordinary items by no longer allowing companies to segregate an extraordinary item from the results of operations, separately present an extraordinary item on the income statement, or disclose income taxes or earnings-per-share data applicable to an extraordinary item. ASU 2015-01 is effective for annual periods and interim periods within those annual periods beginning after December 15, 2015, and early adoption is permitted. The adoption of this standard is not expected to have a material effect on the Company’s results of operations, financial position or disclosures.

ASU 2014-11 – *Repurchase-to-Maturity Transactions, Repurchase Financings, and Disclosures* (“ASU 2014-11”). ASU 2014-11 impacted FASB ASC 860 *Transfers and Servicing* by changing the accounting for repurchase-to-maturity transactions and linked repurchase financings to secured borrowing accounting, which is consistent with the accounting for other repurchase agreements. The amendments also require new disclosures. An entity is required to disclose information on transfers accounted for as sales in transactions that are economically similar to repurchase agreements. An entity must also provide additional information about the types of collateral pledged in repurchase agreements and similar transactions accounted for as secured borrowings. An entity is required to present changes in accounting for transactions outstanding on the effective date as a cumulative-effect adjustment to retained earnings as of the beginning of the period of adoption. The amendments in this update became effective for interim and annual periods beginning after December 15, 2014 and did not have a material impact on the consolidated financial statements although the required disclosures have been included in Note 11.

ASU 2014-09 – *Revenue from Contracts with Customers* (“ASU 2014-09”). ASU 2014-09 provides guidance that an entity should recognize revenue to depict the transfer of promised goods or services to customers in an amount that reflects the consideration to which the entity expects to be entitled in exchange for those goods or services. ASU 2014-09 is effective prospectively, for annual and interim periods, beginning after December 15, 2017. The Company is currently evaluating the impact this standard will have on the Company’s results of operations, financial position or disclosures.

Reclassifications

Certain reclassifications of prior year amounts have been made to conform with the current year presentations.

NOTE 2 – PENDING MERGER

On September 30, 2015, the Company entered into an Agreement and Plan of Merger (the “Merger Agreement”) with Jacksonville Bancorp, Inc., a Florida corporation (“JAXB”). The Jacksonville Bank is a wholly owned banking subsidiary of JAXB that has eight full-service branches located in Jacksonville and Jacksonville Beach, Duval County, Florida, as well as one virtual branch. Under the terms of the Merger Agreement, JAXB shareholders will receive either 0.5861 shares of Ameris common stock or \$16.50 in cash for each share of JAXB common stock or nonvoting common stock they hold, subject to the total consideration being allocated 75% stock and 25% cash. The transaction is expected to close in March 2016 and is subject to customary closing conditions. All required regulatory approvals for the transaction have been received. As of September 30, 2015, JAXB reported assets of \$505.3 million, gross loans of \$399.5 million and deposits of \$433.0 million. The purchase price will be allocated among the net assets of JAXB acquired as appropriate, with the remaining balance being reported as goodwill.

NOTE 3– BUSINESS COMBINATIONS

Branch Acquisition

On June 12, 2015, the Company completed its acquisition of 18 branches from Bank of America, National Association located in Calhoun, Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Suwanee and Walton Counties, Florida and Ben Hill, Colquitt, Dougherty, Laurens, Liberty, Thomas, Tift and Ware Counties, Georgia. Under the terms of the Purchase and Assumption Agreement dated January 28, 2015, the Company paid a deposit premium of \$20.0 million, equal to 3.00% of the average daily deposits for the 15 calendar-day period immediately prior to the acquisition date. In addition, the Company acquired approximately \$4.0 million in loans and \$10.7 million in premises and equipment.

The acquisition of the 18 branches was accounted for using the acquisition method of accounting in accordance with FASB ASC 805, *Business Combinations*. Assets acquired, liabilities assumed and consideration exchanged were recorded at their respective acquisition date fair values. Determining the fair value of assets and liabilities is a complicated process involving significant judgment regarding methods and assumptions used to calculate estimated fair values. Fair values are preliminary and subject to refinement for up to one year after the closing date of the acquisition as additional information regarding the closing date fair values becomes available. During the third and fourth quarters of 2015, management revised its initial estimates regarding the valuation of loans, premises and intangible assets acquired. Management continues to evaluate fair value adjustments related to premises acquired.

The following table presents the assets acquired and liabilities assumed as of June 12, 2015 and their fair value estimates. The fair value adjustments shown in the following table continue to be evaluated by management and may be subject to further adjustment:

(Dollars in Thousands)	<u>As Recorded by Bank of America</u>	<u>Initial Fair Value Adjustments</u>	<u>Subsequent Fair Value Adjustments</u>	<u>As Recorded by Ameris</u>
Assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 630,220	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 630,220
Loans	4,363	-	(364)(d)	3,999
Premises and equipment	10,348	1,060 (a)	(755)(e)	10,653
Intangible assets	-	7,651 (b)	985 (f)	8,636
Other assets	126	-	-	126
Total assets	<u>\$ 645,057</u>	<u>\$ 8,711</u>	<u>\$ (134)</u>	<u>\$ 653,634</u>
Liabilities				
Deposits:				
Noninterest-bearing	\$ 149,854	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 149,854
Interest-bearing	495,110	(215) (c)	-	494,895
Total deposits	644,964	(215)	-	644,749
Other liabilities	93	-	-	93
Total liabilities	<u>645,057</u>	<u>(215)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>644,842</u>
Net identifiable assets acquired over (under) liabilities assumed	-	8,926	(134)	8,792
Goodwill	-	11,076	134	11,210
Net assets acquired over (under) liabilities assumed	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 20,002</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 20,002</u>
Consideration:				
Cash paid as deposit premium	\$ 20,002			
Fair value of total consideration transferred	<u>\$ 20,002</u>			

Explanation of fair value adjustments

- (a) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustments of the premise and equipment as of the acquisition date.
- (b) Adjustment reflects the recording of core deposit intangible on the acquired core deposit accounts.
- (c) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustments based on the Company's evaluation of the acquired deposits.
- (d) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustments based on the Company's evaluation of the acquired loan portfolio.
- (e) Adjustment reflects additional recording of fair value adjustment of the premise and equipment.

- (f) Adjustment reflects additional recording of core deposit intangible on the acquired core deposit accounts.

Goodwill of \$11.2 million, which is the excess of the purchase consideration over the fair value of net assets acquired, was recorded in the branch acquisition and is the result of expected operational synergies and other factors.

In the acquisition, the Company purchased \$4.0 million of loans at fair value. Management identified \$364,000 of overdrafts that were considered to be credit impaired and were subsequently charged off as uncollectible under ASC Topic 310-30.

Merchants & Southern Banks of Florida, Incorporated

On May 22, 2015, the Company completed its acquisition of all shares of the outstanding common stock of Merchants & Southern Banks of Florida, Incorporated (“Merchants”), a bank holding company headquartered in Gainesville, Florida, for a total purchase price of \$50,000,000. Upon consummation of the stock purchase, Merchants was merged with and into the Company, with Ameris as the surviving entity in the merger. At that time, Merchants’ wholly owned banking subsidiary, Merchants and Southern Bank, was also merged with and into the Bank. The acquisition grew the Company’s existing market presence, as Merchants and Southern Bank had a total of 13 banking locations in Alachua, Marion and Clay Counties, Florida.

The acquisition of Merchants was accounted for using the acquisition method of accounting in accordance with FASB ASC 805, *Business Combinations*. Assets acquired, liabilities assumed and consideration exchanged were recorded at their respective acquisition date fair values. Determining the fair value of assets and liabilities is a complicated process involving significant judgment regarding methods and assumptions used to calculate estimated fair values. Fair values are preliminary and subject to refinement for up to one year after the closing date of the acquisition as additional information regarding the closing date fair values becomes available. During the third and fourth quarters of 2015, management revised its initial estimates regarding the valuation of investment securities, core deposit intangible and other assets acquired. In addition, management continued its assessment and recorded the deferred tax assets resulting from differences in the carrying values of acquired assets and assumed liabilities for financial reporting purposes and their basis for income tax purposes. This estimate also reflects acquired net operating loss carryforwards and other acquired assets with built-in losses that are expected to be settled or otherwise recovered in future periods where the realization of such benefits would be subject to applicable limitations under Sections 382 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended. Management continues to evaluate fair value adjustments related to loans and premises acquired.

The following table presents the assets acquired and liabilities of Merchants assumed as of May 22, 2015 and their fair value estimates. The fair value adjustments shown in the following table continue to be evaluated by management and may be subject to further adjustment:

(Dollars in Thousands)	As Recorded by Merchants	Initial Fair Value Adjustments	Subsequent Fair Value Adjustments	As Recorded by Ameris
Assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 7,527	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 7,527
Federal funds sold and interest-bearing balances	106,188	-	-	106,188
Investment securities	164,421	(553)(a)	(639)(j)	163,229
Other investments	872	-	-	872
Loans	199,955	(8,500)(b)	-	191,455
Less allowance for loan losses	(3,354)	3,354 (c)	-	-
Loans, net	196,601	(5,146)	-	191,455
Other real estate owned	4,082	(1,115)(d)	-	2,967
Premises and equipment	14,614	(3,680)(e)	-	10,934
Intangible assets	-	4,577 (f)	(634)(k)	3,943
Other assets	2,333	2,335 (g)	(1,307) (l)	3,361
Total assets	<u>\$ 496,638</u>	<u>\$ (3,582)</u>	<u>\$ (2,580)</u>	<u>\$ 490,476</u>
Liabilities				
Deposits:				
Noninterest-bearing	\$ 121,708	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 121,708
Interest-bearing	286,112	-	41,588(m)	327,700
Total deposits	407,820	-	-	449,408
Federal funds purchased and securities sold under agreements to repurchase	41,588	-	(41,588)(m)	-
Other liabilities	2,151	81 (h)	-	2,232
Subordinated deferrable interest debentures	6,186	(2,680)(i)	-	3,506
Total liabilities	<u>457,745</u>	<u>(2,599)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>455,146</u>
Net identifiable assets acquired over (under) liabilities assumed	38,893	(983)	(2,580)	35,330
Goodwill	-	12,090	2,580	14,670
Net assets acquired over (under) liabilities assumed	<u>\$ 38,893</u>	<u>\$ 11,107</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 50,000</u>
Consideration:				
Cash exchanged for shares	<u>\$ 50,000</u>			
Fair value of total consideration transferred	<u>\$ 50,000</u>			

Explanation of fair value adjustments

- (a) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustments of the available for sale portfolio as of the acquisition date.
- (b) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustments based on the Company's evaluation of the acquired loan portfolio.
- (c) Adjustment reflects the elimination of Merchants' allowance for loan losses.
- (d) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustment based on the Company's evaluation of the acquired OREO portfolio.
- (e) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustment based on the Company's evaluation of the acquired premises.
- (f) Adjustment reflects the recording of core deposit intangible on the acquired core deposit accounts.
- (g) Adjustment reflects the deferred taxes on the difference in the carrying values of acquired assets and assumed liabilities for financial reporting purposes and their basis for federal income tax purposes.
- (h) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustments based on the Company's evaluation of interest rate swap liabilities.

- (i) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustment to the subordinated deferrable interest debentures at the acquisition date.
- (j) Adjustment reflects the additional fair value adjustments of the available for sale portfolio as of the acquisition date.
- (k) Adjustment reflects adjustment to the core deposit intangible on the acquired core deposit accounts.
- (l) Adjustment reflects the additional deferred taxes on the difference in the carrying values of acquired assets and assumed liabilities for financial reporting purposes and their basis for federal income tax purposes.
- (m) Subsequent to acquisition, the acquired securities sold under agreements to repurchase were converted to deposit accounts and are no longer reported as securities sold under agreements to repurchase on the Consolidated Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2015.

Goodwill of \$14.7 million, which is the excess of the purchase price over the fair value of net assets acquired, was recorded in the Merchants acquisition and is the result of expected operational synergies and other factors. This goodwill is not expected to be deductible for tax purposes.

In the acquisition, the Company purchased \$191.5 million of loans at fair value, net of \$8.5 million, or 4.25%, estimated discount to the outstanding principal balance. Of the total loans acquired, management identified \$11.2 million that were considered to be credit impaired and are accounted for under ASC Topic 310-30. The table below summarizes the total contractually required principal and interest cash payment, management's estimate of expected total cash payments and fair value of the loans as of acquisition date for purchased credit impaired loans. Contractually required principal and interest payment have been adjusted for estimated prepayments.

Contractually required principal and interest	\$	17,201
Non-accretable difference		(2,712)
Cash flows expected to be collected		14,489
Accretable yield		(3,254)
Total purchased credit-impaired loans acquired	\$	11,235

The following table presents the acquired loan data for the Merchants acquisition.

	<u>Fair Value of Acquired Loans at Acquisition Date</u>	<u>Gross Contractual Amounts Receivable at Acquisition Date</u>	<u>Best Estimate at Acquisition Date of Contractual Cash Flows Not Expected to be Collected</u>
(Dollars in Thousands)			
Acquired receivables subject to ASC 310-30	\$ 11,235	\$ 14,086	\$ 2,712
Acquired receivables not subject to ASC 310-30	\$ 180,220	\$ 184,906	\$ -

Coastal Bankshares, Inc.

On June 30, 2014, the Company completed its acquisition of The Coastal Bankshares, Inc. ("Coastal"), a bank holding company headquartered in Savannah, Georgia. Upon consummation of the acquisition, Coastal was merged with and into the Company, with Ameris as the surviving entity in the merger. At that time, Coastal's wholly owned banking subsidiary, The Coastal Bank ("Coastal Bank"), was also merged with and into the Bank. The acquisition grew the Company's existing market presence, as Coastal Bank had a total of six banking locations in Chatham, Liberty and Effingham Counties, Georgia. Coastal's common shareholders received 0.4671 of a share of the Company's common stock in exchange for each share of Coastal's common stock. As a result, the Company issued 1,598,998 common shares at a fair value of \$34.5 million and paid \$2.8 million cash in exchange for outstanding warrants.

The acquisition of Coastal was accounted for using the purchase method of accounting in accordance with FASB ASC 805, *Business Combinations*. Assets acquired, liabilities assumed and consideration exchanged were recorded at their respective acquisition date fair values. Determining the fair value of assets and liabilities is a complicated process involving significant judgment regarding methods and assumptions used to calculate estimated fair values. As of June 30, 2015, the Company finalized its valuation of all assets and liabilities acquired.

The following table presents the assets acquired and liabilities of Coastal assumed as of June 30, 2014 and their fair value estimates:

(Dollars in Thousands)	<u>As Recorded by Coastal</u>	<u>Fair Value Adjustments</u>	<u>As Recorded by Ameris</u>
Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 3,895	\$ -	\$ 3,895
Federal funds sold and interest-bearing balances	15,923	-	15,923
Investment securities	67,266	(500)(a)	66,766
Other investments	975	-	975
Mortgage loans held for sale	7,288	-	7,288
Loans	296,141	(16,700)(b)	279,441
Less allowance for loan losses	<u>(3,218)</u>	<u>3,218 (c)</u>	<u>-</u>
Loans, net	292,923	(13,482)	279,441
Other real estate owned	14,992	(6,935)(d)	8,057
Premises and equipment	11,882	-	11,882
Intangible assets	507	4,035 (e)	4,542
Cash value of bank owned life insurance	7,812	-	7,812
Other assets	14,898	(601) (f)	14,297
Total assets	<u>\$ 438,361</u>	<u>\$ (17,483)</u>	<u>\$ 420,878</u>
Liabilities			
Deposits:			
Noninterest-bearing	\$ 80,012	\$ -	\$ 80,012
Interest-bearing	<u>289,012</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>289,012</u>
Total deposits	369,024	-	369,024
Federal funds purchased and securities sold under agreements to repurchase	5,428	-	5,428
Other borrowings	22,005	-	22,005
Other liabilities	6,192	-	6,192
Subordinated deferrable interest debentures	15,465	(6,413)(g)	9,052
Total liabilities	<u>418,114</u>	<u>(6,413)</u>	<u>411,701</u>
Net identifiable assets acquired over (under) liabilities assumed	20,247	(11,070)	9,177
Goodwill	<u>-</u>	<u>28,093</u>	<u>28,093</u>
Net assets acquired over (under) liabilities assumed	<u>\$ 20,247</u>	<u>\$ 17,023</u>	<u>\$ 37,270</u>
Consideration:			
Ameris Bancorp common shares issued	1,598,998		
Purchase price per share of the Company's common stock	<u>\$ 21.56</u>		
Company common stock issued	34,474		
Cash exchanged for shares	<u>2,796</u>		
Fair value of total consideration transferred	<u>\$ 37,270</u>		

Explanation of fair value adjustments

- (a) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustments of the available for sale portfolio as of the acquisition date.
- (b) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustments based on the Company's evaluation of the acquired loan portfolio.

- (c) Adjustment reflects the elimination of Coastal's allowance for loan losses.
- (d) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustment based on the Company's evaluation of the acquired OREO portfolio.
- (e) Adjustment reflects the recording of core deposit intangible on the acquired core deposit accounts.
- (f) Adjustment reflects the deferred taxes on the difference in the carrying values of acquired assets and assumed liabilities for financial reporting purposes and their basis for federal income tax purposes.
- (g) Adjustment reflects the fair value adjustment to the subordinated deferrable interest debentures at the acquisition date.

Goodwill of \$28.1 million, which is the excess of the merger consideration over the fair value of net assets acquired, was recorded in the Coastal acquisition and is the result of expected operational synergies and other factors. This goodwill is not expected to be deductible for tax purposes.

In the acquisition, the Company purchased \$279.4 million of loans at fair value, net of \$16.7 million, or 5.64%, estimated discount to the outstanding principal balance. Of the total loans acquired, management identified \$29.3 million that were considered to be credit impaired and are accounted for under ASC Topic 310-30. The table below summarizes the total contractually required principal and interest cash payment, management's estimate of expected total cash payments and fair value of the loans as of acquisition date for purchased credit impaired loans. Contractually required principal and interest payment have been adjusted for estimated prepayments.

Contractually required principal and interest	\$	38,194
Non-accretable difference		(5,632)
		<hr/>
Cash flows expected to be collected		32,562
Accretable yield		(3,282)
		<hr/>
Total purchased credit-impaired loans acquired	\$	<u>29,280</u>

The results of operations of Merchants and Coastal subsequent to the respective acquisition dates are included in the Company's consolidated statements of operations. The following unaudited pro forma information reflects the Company's estimated consolidated results of operations as if the acquisition had occurred on January 1, 2014, unadjusted for potential cost savings (in thousands).

	<u>Year Ended December 31,</u>	
	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
Net interest income and noninterest income	\$266,710	\$238,055
Net income	\$ 40,514	\$ 41,806
Net income available to common stockholders	\$ 40,514	\$ 41,520
Income per common share available to common stockholders – basic	\$ 1.28	\$ 1.51
Income per common share available to common stockholders – diluted	\$ 1.26	\$ 1.49
Average number of shares outstanding, basic	31,762	27,573
Average number of shares outstanding, diluted	32,127	27,858

A rollforward of purchased non-covered loans for the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014 is shown below:

(Dollars in Thousands)	2015	2014
Balance, January 1	\$ 674,239	\$ 448,753
Charge-offs, net of recoveries	(991)	(84)
Additions due to acquisitions	195,818	279,441
Accretion	10,590	9,745
Transfers to purchased non-covered other real estate owned	(4,473)	(4,160)
Transfer from covered loans due to loss share expiration	50,568	15,475
Payments received	(154,666)	(74,931)
Other	469	-
Ending balance	<u>\$ 771,554</u>	<u>\$ 674,239</u>

The following is a summary of changes in the accretable discounts of purchased non-covered loans during years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014:

(Dollars in Thousands)	2015	2014
Balance, January 1	\$ 25,716	\$ 26,189
Additions due to acquisitions	5,788	7,799
Accretion	(10,590)	(9,745)
Transfer from covered loans due to loss share expiration	1,665	-
Accretable discounts removed due to charge-offs	(1,768)	-
Transfers between non-accretable and accretable discounts, net	3,974	1,473
Ending balance	<u>\$ 24,785</u>	<u>\$ 25,716</u>

NOTE 4. ASSETS ACQUIRED IN FDIC-ASSISTED ACQUISITIONS

From October 2009 through July 2012, the Company has participated in ten FDIC-assisted acquisitions (the “acquisitions”) whereby the Company purchased certain failed institutions out of the FDIC’s receivership. These institutions include:

Bank Acquired	Location:	Branches:	Date Acquired
American United Bank (“AUB”)	Lawrenceville, Ga.	1	October 23, 2009
United Security Bank (“USB”)	Sparta, Ga.	2	November 6, 2009
Satilla Community Bank (“SCB”)	St. Marys, Ga.	1	May 14, 2010
First Bank of Jacksonville (“FBJ”)	Jacksonville, Fl.	2	October 22, 2010
Tifton Banking Company (“TBC”)	Tifton, Ga.	1	November 12, 2010
Darby Bank & Trust (“DBT”)	Vidalia, Ga.	7	November 12, 2010
High Trust Bank (“HTB”)	Stockbridge, Ga.	2	July 15, 2011
One Georgia Bank (“OGB”)	Atlanta, Ga.	1	July 15, 2011
Central Bank of Georgia (“CBG”)	Ellaville, Ga.	5	February 24, 2012
Montgomery Bank & Trust (“MBT”)	Ailey, Ga.	2	July 6, 2012

The following table summarizes the estimated fair values of the assets acquired and liabilities assumed at the date of the acquisitions, as well as key elements of the purchase and assumption agreements between the FDIC and the Bank (in thousands):

	AUB	USB	SCB	FBJ	TBC	DBT	HTB	OGB	CBG	MBT
Assets acquired										
Cash	\$ 26,452	\$ 41,490	\$ (33,093)	\$ 10,669	\$ 4,862	\$ (58,158)	\$ 36,432	\$ 1,585	\$ 65,050	\$ 155,466
Investment securities	10,242	8,335	10,814	7,343	7,060	105,562	14,770	28,891	39,920	-
Federal funds sold	-	2,605	12,661	5,690	-	-	-	5,070	-	-
Loans	56,482	83,646	68,751	40,454	92,568	261,340	84,732	74,843	124,782	1,218
Foreclosed property	2,165	8,069	2,012	1,816	3,472	22,026	10,272	7,242	6,177	-
FDIC loss share asset	24,200	21,640	22,400	11,307	22,807	112,404	49,485	45,488	52,654	-
Core deposit intangible	187	386	185	132	175	1,180	-	-	1,149	-
Other assets	1,266	3,001	612	298	1,092	3,957	1,772	2,933	3,457	183
Total assets acquired	120,994	169,172	84,342	77,709	132,036	448,311	197,463	166,052	293,189	156,867
Liabilities assumed										
Deposits	100,470	141,094	75,530	71,869	132,939	386,958	175,887	136,101	261,036	156,699
FHLB advances	7,802	1,504	-	2,613	-	2,724	-	21,107	10,334	-
Other liabilities	277	453	604	842	53	54,418	2,654	899	1,782	168
Total liabilities assumed	108,549	143,051	76,134	75,324	132,992	444,100	178,541	158,107	273,152	156,867
Net assets acquired	\$ 12,445	\$ 26,121	\$ 8,208	\$ 2,385	\$ (956)	\$ 4,211	\$ 18,922	\$ 7,945	\$ 20,037	\$ -

Each acquisition with loss-sharing agreements has separate agreements for the single family residential assets (“SFR”) and the non-single family assets (“NSF”). The SFR agreements cover losses and recoveries for ten years. The NSF agreements are for eight years. During the first five years, losses and recoveries are covered. During the final three years, only recoveries, net of expenses, are covered. The AUB SFR agreement was terminated during 2012 and Ameris received a payment of \$87,000. The AUB and USB NSF agreements passed their five-year anniversary during the fourth quarter of 2014, the SCB NSF agreement passed its five-year anniversary during the second quarter of 2015 and the FBJ, TBC and DBT NSF agreements passed their five year anniversary during the fourth quarter of 2015. Losses will no longer be reimbursed on these agreements. The remaining NSF assets for these six agreements have been reclassified to purchased non-covered loans and purchased non-covered other real estate owned.

The following table summarizes components of all covered assets at December 31, 2015 and 2014 and their origin. The FDIC loss-share receivable is shown net of the clawback liability.

	Covered loans	Less Fair Value adjustments	Total covered loans	OREO	Less Fair value adjustments	Total covered OREO	Total covered assets	FDIC loss-share receivable (payable)
As of December 31, 2015:								
(Dollars in thousands)								
AUB	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 111
USB	3,639	16	3,623	165	-	165	3,788	(1,424)
SCB	5,228	124	5,104	-	-	-	5,104	149
FBJ	4,782	562	4,220	41	-	41	4,261	252
DBT	15,934	1,131	14,803	-	-	-	14,803	(1,084)
TBC	2,159	11	2,148	-	-	-	2,148	1,446
HTB	44,405	3,881	40,524	2,433	643	1,790	42,314	3,875
OGB	27,561	1,900	25,661	160	-	160	25,821	913
CBG	44,865	3,419	41,446	3,139	284	2,855	44,301	2,063
Total.....	\$ 148,573	\$ 11,044	\$ 137,529	\$ 5,938	\$ 927	\$ 5,011	\$ 142,540	\$ 6,301
As of December 31, 2014:								
AUB	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 188
USB	4,350	150	4,200	165	-	165	4,365	(1,197)
SCB	26,686	602	26,084	2,849	389	2,460	28,544	1,828
FBJ	21,243	1,825	19,418	632	0	632	20,050	1,885
DBT	64,338	6,437	57,901	6,655	514	6,141	64,042	6,860
TBC	23,487	1,117	22,370	2,388	367	2,021	24,391	3,287
HTB	52,699	5,120	47,579	3,670	1,283	2,387	49,966	6,459
OGB	42,971	3,785	39,186	2,244	39	2,205	41,391	3,906
CBG	60,950	6,409	54,541	4,805	909	3,896	58,437	8,135
Total.....	\$ 296,724	\$ 25,445	\$ 271,279	\$ 23,408	\$ 3,501	\$ 19,907	\$ 291,186	\$ 31,351

A rollforward of acquired covered loans for the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014 is shown below:

(Dollars in Thousands)	2015	2014
Balance, January 1	\$ 271,279	\$ 390,237
Charge-offs, net of recoveries	(5,558)	(9,255)
Accretion.....	9,658	22,188
Transfers to covered other real estate owned	(7,910)	(13,650)
Transfer to purchased, non-covered loans due to loss share expiration.....	(50,568)	(15,475)
Payments received.....	(79,372)	(102,996)
Other	-	230
Ending balance.....	<u>\$ 137,529</u>	<u>\$ 271,279</u>

The following is a summary of changes in the accretable discounts of acquired covered loans during the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014:

	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 15,578	\$ 25,493
Accretion	(9,658)	(22,188)
Transfer to purchased, non-covered loans due to loss share expiration	(1,665)	-
Transfers between non-accretable and accretable discounts, net	4,808	12,273
Balance, end of year	<u>\$ 9,063</u>	<u>\$ 15,578</u>

The shared-loss agreements are subject to the servicing procedures as specified in the agreement with the FDIC. The expected reimbursements under the shared-loss agreements were recorded as an indemnification asset at their estimated fair values on the acquisition dates. As of December 31, 2015 and 2014, the Company has recorded a clawback liability of \$8.2 million and \$6.2 million, respectively, which represents the obligation of the Company to reimburse the FDIC should actual losses be less than certain thresholds established in each loss-sharing agreement. This clawback is netted against the FDIC loss share receivable. Changes in the FDIC loss-share receivable are as follows:

	For the Years Ended December 31,	
	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Beginning balance	\$ 31,351	\$ 65,441
Payments received from FDIC	(19,273)	(22,494)
Amortization, net	(8,878)	(18,449)
Change in clawback liability	(2,008)	(1,222)
Increase in receivable due to:		
Charge-offs on covered loans	416	3,372
Write downs of covered other real estate owned	4,752	4,771
Reimbursable expenses on covered assets	2,582	1,078
Other activity, net	(2,641)	(1,146)
Ending balance	<u>\$ 6,301</u>	<u>\$ 31,351</u>

NOTE 5. SECURITIES

The amortized cost and estimated fair value of securities available for sale with gross unrealized gains and losses are summarized as follows:

	Amortized Cost	Gross Unrealized Gains	Gross Unrealized Losses	Estimated Fair Value
	(Dollars in Thousands)			
December 31, 2015:				
U.S. Government sponsored agencies	\$ 14,959	\$ -	\$ (69)	\$ 14,890
State, county and municipal securities	157,681	4,046	(411)	161,316
Corporate debt securities	5,900	145	(28)	6,017
Mortgage-backed securities	599,721	3,945	(2,704)	600,962
Total debt securities	<u>\$ 778,261</u>	<u>\$ 8,136</u>	<u>\$ (3,212)</u>	<u>\$ 783,185</u>
December 31, 2014:				
U.S. Government sponsored agencies	\$ 14,953	\$ -	\$ (275)	\$ 14,678
State, county and municipal securities	137,873	3,935	(433)	141,375
Corporate debt securities	10,812	228	-	11,040
Mortgage-backed securities	369,581	6,534	(1,403)	374,712
Total debt securities	<u>\$ 533,219</u>	<u>\$ 10,697</u>	<u>\$ (2,111)</u>	<u>\$ 541,805</u>

The following table shows the gross unrealized losses and estimated fair value of securities aggregated by category and length of time that securities have been in a continuous unrealized loss position at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

Description of Securities	Less Than 12 Months		12 Months or More		Total	
	Estimated Fair Value	Unrealized Losses	Estimated Fair Value	Unrealized Losses	Estimated Fair Value	Unrealized Losses
	(Dollars in Thousands)					
December 31, 2015:						
U. S. Government sponsored agencies	\$ 9,932	\$ (27)	\$ 4,958	\$ (42)	\$ 14,890	\$ (69)
State, county and municipal securities	19,293	(199)	11,557	(212)	30,850	(411)
Corporate debt securities	1,383	(28)	-	-	1,383	(28)
Mortgage-backed securities	263,281	(1,950)	29,950	(754)	293,231	(2,704)
Total temporarily impaired securities	<u>\$ 293,889</u>	<u>\$ (2,204)</u>	<u>\$ 46,465</u>	<u>\$ (1,008)</u>	<u>\$ 340,354</u>	<u>\$ (3,212)</u>
December 31, 2014:						
U. S. Government sponsored agencies	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 14,678	\$ (275)	\$ 14,678	\$ (275)
State, county and municipal securities	15,038	(70)	19,665	(363)	34,703	(433)
Corporate debt securities	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mortgage-backed securities	36,760	(221)	46,812	(1,182)	83,572	(1,403)
Total temporarily impaired securities	<u>\$ 51,798</u>	<u>\$ (291)</u>	<u>\$ 81,155</u>	<u>\$ (1,820)</u>	<u>\$ 132,953</u>	<u>\$ (2,111)</u>

As of December 31, 2015, the Company's security portfolio consisted of 365 securities, 126 of which were in an unrealized loss position. The majority of unrealized losses are related to the Company's mortgage-backed and state, county and municipal securities, as discussed below.

At December 31, 2015, the Company held 100 mortgage backed securities that were in an unrealized loss position, all of which were issued by U.S. government-sponsored entities and agencies. Because the decline in fair value is attributable to changes in interest rates and illiquidity, and not credit quality, and because the Company does not have the intent to sell these mortgage-backed securities and it is likely that it will not be required to sell the securities before their anticipated recovery, the Company does not consider these securities to be other-than-temporarily impaired at December 31, 2015.

At December 31, 2015, the Company held 20 state, county and municipal securities, three U.S. government sponsored agency securities, and three corporate securities that were in an unrealized loss position. Because the decline in fair value is attributable to changes in interest rates, and not credit quality, and because the Company does not have the intent to sell these securities and it is likely that it will not be required to sell the securities before their anticipated recovery, the Company does not consider these securities to be other-than-temporarily impaired at December 31, 2015.

During 2015 and 2014, the Company received timely and current interest and principal payments on all of the securities classified as corporate debt securities. During the third quarter of 2015, the Company received all interest payments due on a security that had previously deferred interest since the fourth quarter of 2010. The Company's investments in subordinated debt include investments in regional and super-regional banks on which the Company prepares regular analysis through review of financial information or credit ratings. Investments in preferred securities are also concentrated in the preferred obligations of regional and super-regional banks through non-pooled investment structures. The Company did not have investments in "pooled" trust preferred securities at December 31, 2015 or 2014.

Management and the Company's Asset and Liability Committee (the "ALCO Committee") evaluate securities for other-than-temporary impairment at least on a quarterly basis, and more frequently when economic or market concerns warrant such evaluation. While the majority of the unrealized losses on debt securities relate to changes in interest rates, corporate debt securities have also been affected by reduced levels of liquidity and higher risk premiums. Occasionally, management engages independent third parties to evaluate the Company's position in certain corporate debt securities to aid management and the ALCO Committee in its determination regarding the status of impairment. The Company believes that each investment poses minimal credit risk and further, that the Company does not intend to sell these investment securities at an unrealized loss position at December 31, 2015, and it is more likely than not that the Company will not be required to sell these securities prior to recovery or maturity. Therefore, at December 31, 2015, these investments are not considered impaired on an other-than-temporary basis.

At December 31, 2015 and 2014, all of the Company's mortgage-backed securities were obligations of government-sponsored agencies.

The amortized cost and estimated fair value of debt securities available for sale as of December 31, 2015, by contractual maturity are shown below. Maturities may differ from contractual maturities in mortgage-backed securities because the mortgages underlying the securities may be called or repaid without penalty. Securities not due at a single maturity date are shown separately. Therefore, these securities are not included in the maturity categories in the following maturity summary.

	Amortized Cost	Estimated Fair Value
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Due in one year or less	\$ 5,405	\$ 5,421
Due from one year to five years	51,716	53,081
Due from five to ten years	62,296	63,868
Due after ten years	59,123	59,853
Mortgage-backed securities	599,721	600,962
	<u>\$ 778,261</u>	<u>\$ 783,185</u>

Securities with a carrying value of approximately \$551.0 million and \$286.6 million at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively, serve as collateral to secure public deposits, securities sold under agreements to repurchase and for other purposes required or permitted by law.

Gains and losses on sales of securities available for sale consist of the following:

	December 31,		
	2015	2014	2013
	(Dollars in Thousands)		
Gross gains on sales of securities	\$ 396	\$ 141	\$ 353
Gross losses on sales of securities	(259)	(3)	(182)
Net realized gains on sales of securities available for sale	<u>\$ 137</u>	<u>\$ 138</u>	<u>\$ 171</u>

NOTE 6. LOANS AND ALLOWANCE FOR LOAN LOSSES

Loans

The Bank engages in a full complement of lending activities, including real estate-related loans, agriculture-related loans, commercial and financial loans and consumer installment loans within select markets in Georgia, Alabama, Florida and South Carolina. The Bank also purchased loan pools during 2015 collateralized by properties located outside our Southeast markets, specifically in California, Washington and Illinois. The Bank concentrates the majority of its lending activities in real estate loans. While risk of loss in the Company's portfolio is primarily tied to the credit quality of the various borrowers, risk of loss may increase due to factors beyond the Company's control, such as local, regional and/or national economic downturns. General conditions in the real estate market may also impact the relative risk in the real estate portfolio.

A substantial portion of the Bank's loans are secured by real estate in the Bank's primary market area. In addition, a substantial portion of the OREO is located in those same markets. Accordingly, the ultimate collectability of a substantial portion of the Bank's loan portfolio and the recovery of a substantial portion of the carrying amount of OREO are susceptible to changes in real estate conditions in the Bank's primary market area.

Commercial, financial and agricultural loans include both secured and unsecured loans for working capital, expansion, crop production, and other business purposes. Short-term working capital loans are secured by non-real estate collateral such as accounts receivable, crops, inventory and equipment. The Company evaluates the financial strength, cash flow, management, credit history of the borrower and the quality of the collateral securing the loan. The Bank often requires personal guarantees and secondary sources of repayment on commercial, financial and agricultural loans.

Real estate loans include construction and development loans, commercial and farmland loans and residential loans. Construction and development loans include loans for the development of residential neighborhoods, construction of one-to-four family home residential construction loans to builders and consumers, and commercial real estate construction loans, primarily for owner-occupied properties. The Company limits its construction lending risk through adherence to established underwriting procedures. Commercial real estate loans include loans secured by owner-occupied commercial buildings for office, storage, retail, farmland and warehouse space. They also include non-owner occupied commercial buildings such as leased retail and office space. Commercial real estate loans may be larger in size and may involve a greater degree of risk than one-to-four family residential mortgage loans. Payments on such loans are often dependent on successful operation or management of the properties. The Company's residential loans represent permanent mortgage financing and are secured by residential properties located within the Bank's market areas.

Consumer installment loans and other loans include automobile loans, boat and recreational vehicle financing, and both secured and unsecured personal loans. Consumer loans carry greater risks than other loans, as the collateral can consist of rapidly depreciating assets such as automobiles and equipment that may not provide an adequate source of repayment of the loan in the case of default.

Loans are stated at unpaid balances, net of unearned income and deferred loan fees. Balances within the major loans receivable categories are presented in the following table:

	December 31,	
	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 449,623	\$ 319,654
Real estate – construction & development	244,693	161,507
Real estate – commercial & farmland	1,104,991	907,524
Real estate – residential	570,430	456,106
Consumer installment	31,125	30,782
Other	6,015	14,308
	<u>2,406,877</u>	<u>1,889,881</u>
Allowance for loan losses	20,481	21,157
Loans, net	<u>\$2,386,396</u>	<u>\$1,868,724</u>

Purchased non-covered loans are defined as loans that were acquired in bank acquisitions that are not covered by a loss-sharing agreement with the FDIC. Loans that were previously classified as covered loans where the loss-sharing agreements have expired are also included in purchased non-covered loans. Purchased non-covered loans totaling \$771.6 million and \$674.2 million at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively, are not included in the above schedule.

The carrying value of purchased non-covered loans are shown below according to loan type as of the end of the years shown:

	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 45,462	\$ 38,041
Real estate – construction & development	72,080	58,362
Real estate – commercial & farmland	390,755	306,706
Real estate – residential	258,153	266,342
Consumer installment loans	5,104	4,788
	<u>\$771,554</u>	<u>\$674,239</u>

Purchased loan pools are defined as groups of loans that were not acquired in bank acquisitions or FDIC-assisted transactions. As of December 31, 2015, purchased loan pools totaled \$593.0 million and consisted of whole-loan, adjustable rate residential mortgages on properties outside the Company's markets, with principal balances totaling \$580.7 million and \$12.3 million of purchase premium paid at acquisition. At December 31, 2015, all loans included in the purchased loan pools were performing current loans, all risk-rated grade 20, and the Company had allocated \$581,000 of allowance for loan losses for the purchased loan pools. The Company did not have any purchased loan pools at December 31, 2014. As part of the due diligence process prior to purchasing an individual mortgage pool, a complete re-underwrite of the individual loan files was conducted. The underwriting process included a review of all income, asset, credit and property related documentation that was used to originate the loan. Underwriters utilized the originating lender's program guidelines, as well as general prudent mortgage lending standards to assess each individual loan file. Additional research was conducted in order to assess the real estate market conditions and market expectations in the geographic areas where a collateral concentration existed. As part of this review, an automated valuation model was employed to provide current collateral valuations and to support individual loan-to-value ratios. Additionally, a sample of site inspections were completed to provide further assurance. The results of the due diligence review were evaluated by officers of the Company in order to determine overall conformance to the Bank's credit and lending policies.

Covered loans are defined as loans that were acquired in FDIC-assisted transactions that are covered by a loss-sharing agreement with the FDIC. Covered loans totaling \$137.5 million and \$271.3 million at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively, are not included in the above schedules.

The carrying value of covered loans are shown below according to loan type as of the end of the years shown:

	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 5,546	\$ 21,467
Real estate – construction & development	7,612	23,447
Real estate – commercial & farmland	71,226	147,627
Real estate – residential	53,038	78,520
Consumer installment loans	107	218
	<u>\$ 137,529</u>	<u>\$ 271,279</u>

Nonaccrual and Past Due Loans

A loan is placed on non-accrual status when, in management's judgment, the collection of the interest income appears doubtful. Interest receivable that has been accrued and is subsequently determined to have doubtful collectability is charged to interest income. Interest on loans that are classified as non-accrual is subsequently applied to principal until the loans are returned to accrual status. Loans are returned to accrual status when all the principal and interest amounts contractually due are brought current and future payments are reasonably assured. Past due loans are loans whose principal or interest is past due 30 days or more. In some cases, where borrowers are experiencing financial difficulties, loans may be restructured to provide terms significantly different from the original contractual terms.

The following table presents an analysis of loans accounted for on a nonaccrual basis, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans:

	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 1,302	\$ 1,672
Real estate – construction & development	1,812	3,774
Real estate – commercial & farmland	7,019	8,141
Real estate – residential	6,278	7,663
Consumer installment loans	449	478
	<u>\$ 16,860</u>	<u>\$ 21,728</u>

The following table presents an analysis of purchased non-covered loans accounted for on a nonaccrual basis:

	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 1,064	\$ 175
Real estate – construction & development	1,106	1,119
Real estate – commercial & farmland	4,920	10,242
Real estate – residential	6,168	6,644
Consumer installment loans	72	69
	<u>\$ 13,330</u>	<u>\$ 18,249</u>

The following table presents an analysis of covered loans accounted for on a nonaccrual basis:

	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 2,803	\$ 8,541
Real estate – construction & development	1,701	7,601
Real estate – commercial & farmland	5,034	12,584
Real estate – residential	3,663	6,595
Consumer installment loans	37	91
	<u>\$ 13,238</u>	<u>\$ 35,412</u>

The following table presents an analysis of loans, excluding purchased non-covered and covered past due loans as of December 31, 2015 and 2014.

	Loans 30-59 Days Past Due	Loans 60-89 Days Past Due	Loans 90 or More Days Past Due	Total Loans Past Due	Current Loans	Total Loans	Loans 90 Days or More Past Due and Still Accruing
	(Dollars in Thousands)						
<u>As of December 31, 2015:</u>							
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 568	\$ 271	\$ 835	\$ 1,674	\$ 447,949	\$ 449,623	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	1,413	261	1,739	3,413	241,280	244,693	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	1,781	641	6,912	9,334	1,095,657	1,104,991	-
Real estate – residential	3,806	2,120	5,121	11,047	559,383	570,430	-
Consumer installment loans	374	188	238	800	30,325	31,125	-
Other	-	-	-	-	6,015	6,015	-
Total	<u>\$ 7,942</u>	<u>\$ 3,481</u>	<u>\$ 14,845</u>	<u>\$ 26,268</u>	<u>\$ 2,380,609</u>	<u>\$ 2,406,877</u>	<u>\$ -</u>
<u>As of December 31, 2014:</u>							
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 900	\$ 233	\$ 1,577	\$ 2,710	\$ 316,944	\$ 319,654	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	1,382	286	3,367	5,035	156,472	161,507	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	2,859	635	7,668	11,162	896,362	907,524	-
Real estate – residential	3,953	2,334	6,755	13,042	443,064	456,106	-
Consumer installment loans	634	158	366	1,158	29,624	30,782	1
Other	-	-	-	-	14,308	14,308	-
Total	<u>\$ 9,728</u>	<u>\$ 3,646</u>	<u>\$ 19,733</u>	<u>\$ 33,107</u>	<u>\$ 1,856,774</u>	<u>\$ 1,889,881</u>	<u>\$ 1</u>

The following table presents an analysis of purchased non-covered past due loans as of December 31, 2015 and 2014.

	Loans 30-59 Days Past Due	Loans 60-89 Days Past Due	Loans 90 or More Days Past Due	Total Loans Past Due	Current Loans	Total Loans	Loans 90 Days or More Past Due and Still Accruing
(Dollars in Thousands)							
<u>As of December 30, 2015:</u>							
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 248	\$ 13	\$ 846	\$ 1,107	\$ 44,355	\$ 45,462	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	416	687	420	1,523	70,557	72,080	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	2,479	1,629	3,347	7,455	383,300	390,755	-
Real estate – residential	4,965	2,176	4,928	12,069	246,084	258,153	-
Consumer installment loans	31	9	70	110	4,994	5,104	-
Total	<u>\$ 8,139</u>	<u>\$ 4,514</u>	<u>\$ 9,611</u>	<u>\$ 22,264</u>	<u>\$ 749,290</u>	<u>\$ 771,554</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

	Loans 30-59 Days Past Due	Loans 60-89 Days Past Due	Loans 90 or More Days Past Due	Total Loans Past Due	Current Loans	Total Loans	Loans 90 Days or More Past Due and Still Accruing
(Dollars in Thousands)							
<u>As of December 30, 2014:</u>							
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 461	\$ 90	\$ 175	\$ 726	\$ 37,315	\$ 38,041	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	790	1,735	1,117	3,642	54,720	58,362	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	2,107	1,194	9,529	12,830	293,876	306,706	-
Real estate – residential	6,907	1,401	6,369	14,677	251,665	266,342	-
Consumer installment loans	82	-	65	147	4,641	4,788	-
Total	<u>\$ 10,347</u>	<u>\$ 4,420</u>	<u>\$ 17,255</u>	<u>\$ 32,022</u>	<u>\$ 642,217</u>	<u>\$ 674,239</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

The following table presents an analysis of covered past due loans as of December 31, 2015 and 2014:

	Loans 30-59 Days Past Due	Loans 60-89 Days Past Due	Loans 90 or More Days Past Due	Total Loans Past Due	Current Loans	Total Loans	Loans 90 Days or More Past Due and Still Accruing
(Dollars in Thousands)							
As of December 30, 2015:							
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,802	\$ 2,802	\$ 2,744	\$ 5,546	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	96	-	1,633	1,729	5,883	7,612	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	170	205	3,064	3,439	67,787	71,226	-
Real estate – residential	2,155	1,001	2,658	5,814	47,224	53,038	-
Consumer installment loans	-	-	37	37	70	107	-
Total	\$ 2,421	\$ 1,206	\$ 10,194	\$ 13,821	\$ 123,708	\$ 137,529	\$ -

	Loans 30-59 Days Past Due	Loans 60-89 Days Past Due	Loans 90 or More Days Past Due	Total Loans Past Due	Current Loans	Total Loans	Loans 90 Days or More Past Due and Still Accruing
(Dollars in Thousands)							
As of December 31, 2014:							
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 451	\$ 136	\$ 1,878	\$ 2,465	\$ 19,002	\$ 21,467	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	238	226	6,703	7,167	16,280	23,447	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	4,371	1,486	7,711	13,568	134,059	147,627	714
Real estate – residential	3,464	962	5,656	10,082	68,438	78,520	-
Consumer installment loans	10	-	91	101	117	218	-
Total	\$ 8,534	\$ 2,810	\$ 22,039	\$ 33,383	\$ 237,896	\$ 271,279	\$ 714

Impaired Loans

Loans are considered impaired when, based on current information and events, it is probable the Company will be unable to collect all amounts due in accordance with the original contractual terms of the loan agreements. Impaired loans include loans on nonaccrual status and accruing troubled debt restructurings. When determining if the Company will be unable to collect all principal and interest payments due in accordance with the contractual terms of the loan agreement, the Company considers the borrower's capacity to pay, which includes such factors as the borrower's current financial statements, an analysis of global cash flow sufficient to pay all debt obligations and an evaluation of secondary sources of repayment, such as guarantor support and collateral value. The Company individually assesses for impairment all nonaccrual loans greater than \$200,000 and all troubled debt restructurings greater than \$100,000. The tables below include all loans deemed impaired, whether or not individually assessed for impairment. If a loan is deemed impaired, a specific valuation allowance is allocated, if necessary, so that the loan is reported net, at the present value of estimated future cash flows using the loan's existing rate or at the fair value of collateral if repayment is expected solely from the collateral. Interest payments on impaired loans are typically applied to principal unless collectability of the principal amount is reasonably assured, in which case interest is recognized on a cash basis.

The following is a summary of information pertaining to impaired loans, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans:

	As of and For the Years Ended December 31,		
	2015	2014	2013
	(Dollars in Thousands)		
Nonaccrual loans	\$ 16,860	\$ 21,728	\$ 29,203
Troubled debt restructurings not included above	14,418	12,759	17,214
Total impaired loans	<u>\$ 31,278</u>	<u>\$ 34,487</u>	<u>\$ 46,417</u>
Interest income recognized on impaired loans	\$ 909	\$ 1,991	\$ 1,938
Foregone interest income on impaired loans	<u>\$ 1,204</u>	<u>\$ 1,491</u>	<u>\$ 1,784</u>

The following table presents an analysis of information pertaining to impaired loans, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans as of December 31, 2015 and 2014.

	Unpaid Contractual Principal Balance	Recorded Investment With No Allowance	Recorded Investment With Allowance	Total Recorded Investment	Related Allowance	Average Recorded Investment
	(Dollars in Thousands)					
As of December 31, 2015:						
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 3,062	\$ 158	\$ 1,385	\$ 1,543	\$ 135	\$ 2,275
Real estate – construction & development	3,581	230	2,374	2,604	774	3,228
Real estate – commercial & farmland	14,385	6,702	6,083	12,785	1,067	15,105
Real estate – residential	15,809	1,621	12,230	13,851	2,224	11,977
Consumer installment loans	592	-	495	495	9	488
Total	<u>\$ 37,429</u>	<u>\$ 8,711</u>	<u>\$ 22,567</u>	<u>\$ 31,278</u>	<u>\$ 4,209</u>	<u>\$ 33,073</u>

	Unpaid Contractual Principal Balance	Recorded Investment With No Allowance	Recorded Investment With Allowance	Total Recorded Investment	Related Allowance	Average Recorded Investment
	(Dollars in Thousands)					
As of December 31, 2014:						
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 3,387	\$ 6	\$ 1,956	\$ 1,962	\$ 395	\$ 3,021
Real estate – construction & development	8,325	448	4,005	4,453	771	5,368
Real estate – commercial & farmland	17,514	4,967	9,651	14,618	1,859	15,972
Real estate – residential	15,571	3,514	9,407	12,921	974	16,317
Consumer installment loans	618	-	533	533	9	519
Total	<u>\$ 45,415</u>	<u>\$ 8,935</u>	<u>\$ 25,552</u>	<u>\$ 34,487</u>	<u>\$ 4,008</u>	<u>\$ 41,197</u>

During 2015, 2014 and 2013, the Company recorded provision for loan loss expense of \$751,000, \$843,000 and \$1.5 million, respectively, to account for losses where there was a decrease in cash flows from the initial estimates on loans acquired in FDIC-assisted transactions. During 2015, the Company recorded a net recovery of \$237,000 to account for loans where there was an increase in cash flows from the initial estimates on purchased, non-covered loans. During 2014, the Company recorded provision for loan loss expense of \$84,000 to account for losses where there was a decrease in cash flows from the initial estimates on purchased, non-covered loans. The Company did not record a provision for loan loss expense to account for losses where the initial estimate of cash flows was revised downward based on new information on purchased, non-covered loans during 2013. The allowance for loan losses recorded on purchased non-covered loans and covered loans that is immediately charged off is related to the purchased credit-impaired loans. Charge-offs on purchased loans, both covered and non-covered, are recorded when impairment is recorded. Provision expense for covered loans is recorded net of the indemnification by the FDIC loss-sharing agreements.

The following is a summary of information pertaining to purchased non-covered impaired loans:

	As of and For the Years Ended December 31,		
	2015	2014	2013
	(Dollars in Thousands)		
Nonaccrual loans	\$ 13,330	\$ 18,249	\$ 6,659
Troubled debt restructurings not included above	9,373	1,212	5,938
Total impaired loans	<u>\$ 22,703</u>	<u>\$ 19,461</u>	<u>\$ 12,597</u>
Interest income recognized on impaired loans	\$ 785	\$ 109	\$ -
Foregone interest income on impaired loans	<u>\$ 1,365</u>	<u>\$ 1,759</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

The following table presents an analysis of information pertaining to purchased non-covered impaired loans as of December 31, 2015 and 2014.

	Unpaid Contractual Principal Balance	Recorded Investment With No Allowance	Recorded Investment With Allowance	Total Recorded Investment	Related Allowance	Average Recorded Investment
	(Dollars in Thousands)					
As of December 31, 2015:						
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 3,103	\$ 1,066	\$ -	\$ 1,066	\$ -	\$ 392
Real estate – construction & development	8,987	1,469	-	1,469	-	1,429
Real estate – commercial & farmland	14,999	11,134	-	11,134	-	10,806
Real estate – residential	14,946	8,957	-	8,957	-	8,067
Consumer installment loans	94	77	-	77	-	65
Total	<u>\$ 42,129</u>	<u>\$ 22,703</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 22,703</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 20,759</u>

	Unpaid Contractual Principal Balance	Recorded Investment With No Allowance	Recorded Investment With Allowance	Total Recorded Investment	Related Allowance	Average Recorded Investment
	(Dollars in Thousands)					
As of December 31, 2014:						
Commercial, financial & agricultural	\$ 499	\$ 175	\$ -	\$ 175	\$ -	\$ 165
Real estate – construction & development	2,210	1,436	-	1,436	-	1,643
Real estate – commercial & farmland	13,520	10,588	-	10,588	-	7,484
Real estate – residential	10,487	7,191	-	7,191	-	7,084
Consumer installment loans	169	71	-	71	-	68
Total	<u>\$ 26,885</u>	<u>\$ 19,461</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 19,461</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 16,444</u>

Credit Quality Indicators

The Company uses a nine category risk grading system to assign a risk grade to each loan in the portfolio. Following is a description of the general characteristics of the grades:

Grade 10 – Prime Credit – This grade represents loans to the Company’s most creditworthy borrowers or loans that are secured by cash or cash equivalents.

Grade 15 – Good Credit – This grade includes loans that exhibit one or more characteristics better than that of a *Satisfactory Credit*. Generally, debt service coverage and borrower’s liquidity is materially better than required by the Company’s loan policy.

Grade 20 – Satisfactory Credit – This grade is assigned to loans to borrowers who exhibit satisfactory credit histories, contain acceptable loan structures and demonstrate ability to repay.

Grade 23 – Performing, Under-Collateralized Credit – This grade is assigned to loans that are currently performing and supported by adequate financial information that reflects repayment capacity, but exhibits a loan-to-value ratio greater than 110%, based on a documented collateral valuation.

Grade 25 – Minimum Acceptable Credit – This grade includes loans which exhibit all the characteristics of a *Satisfactory Credit*, but warrant more than normal level of banker supervision due to (i) circumstances which elevate the risks of performance (such as start-up operations, untested management, heavy leverage, interim losses); (ii) adverse, extraordinary events that have affected, or could affect, the borrower’s cash flow, financial condition, ability to continue operating profitability or refinancing (such as death of principal, fire, divorce); (iii) loans that require more than the normal servicing requirements (such as any type of construction financing, acquisition and development loans, accounts receivable or inventory loans and floor plan loans); (iv) existing technical exceptions which raise some doubts about the Bank’s perfection in its collateral position or the continued financial capacity of the borrower; or (v) improvements in formerly criticized borrowers, which may warrant banker supervision.

Grade 30 – Other Asset Especially Mentioned – This grade includes loans that exhibit potential weaknesses that deserve management’s close attention. If left uncorrected, these weaknesses may result in deterioration of the repayment prospects for the asset or in the Company’s credit position at some future date.

Grade 40 – Substandard – This grade represents loans which are inadequately protected by the current sound worth and paying capacity of the borrower or of the collateral pledged, if any. These assets exhibit a well-defined weakness or are characterized by the distinct possibility that the Bank will sustain some loss if the deficiencies are not corrected. These weaknesses may be characterized by past due performance, operating losses or questionable collateral values.

Grade 50 – Doubtful – This grade includes loans which exhibit all of the characteristics of a substandard loan with the added provision that the weaknesses make collection or liquidation in full, on the basis of currently existing facts, conditions and values, highly questionable or improbable.

Grade 60 – Loss – This grade is assigned to loans which are considered uncollectible and of such little value that their continuance as active assets of the Bank is not warranted. This classification does not mean that the loss has absolutely no recovery or salvage value, but rather it is not practical or desirable to defer writing it off.

The following table presents the loan portfolio, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, by risk grade as of December 31, 2015 and 2014.

As of December 31, 2015:

<u>Risk Grade</u>	<u>Commercial, financial & agricultural</u>	<u>Real estate - construction & development</u>	<u>Real estate - commercial & farmland</u>	<u>Real estate - residential</u>	<u>Consumer installment loans</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
(Dollars in Thousands)							
10	\$ 241,721	\$ 294	\$ 116	\$ 1,606	\$ 6,872	\$ -	\$ 250,609
15	28,420	2,074	117,880	78,165	1,191	-	227,730
20	97,142	46,221	685,538	369,624	19,780	6,015	1,224,320
23	559	7,827	13,073	6,112	36	-	27,607
25	77,829	183,512	254,012	91,465	2,595	-	609,413
30	1,492	1,620	13,821	7,347	143	-	24,423
40	2,460	3,145	20,551	16,111	506	-	42,773
50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
60	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Total	\$ 449,623	\$ 244,693	\$ 1,104,991	\$ 570,430	\$ 31,125	\$6,015	\$ 2,406,877

As of December 31, 2014:

<u>Risk Grade</u>	<u>Commercial, financial & agricultural</u>	<u>Real estate - construction & development</u>	<u>Real estate - commercial & farmland</u>	<u>Real estate - residential</u>	<u>Consumer installment loans</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
(Dollars in Thousands)							
10	\$ 121,355	\$ 268	\$ 155	\$ 226	\$ 6,573	\$ -	\$ 128,577
15	25,318	4,010	128,170	59,301	1,005	-	217,804
20	100,599	47,541	511,198	256,758	17,544	14,308	947,948
23	56	8,933	10,507	9,672	37	-	29,205
25	62,519	93,514	224,464	102,998	4,692	-	488,187
30	3,758	1,474	13,035	7,459	257	-	25,983
40	6,049	5,767	19,995	19,692	673	-	52,176
50	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$ 319,654	\$ 161,507	\$ 907,524	\$ 456,106	\$ 30,782	\$14,308	\$ 1,889,881

The following table presents the purchased non-covered loan portfolio by risk grade as of December 31, 2015 and 2014.

As of December 31, 2015:

<u>Risk Grade</u>	<u>Commercial, financial & agricultural</u>	<u>Real estate - construction & development</u>	<u>Real estate - commercial & farmland</u>	<u>Real estate - residential</u>	<u>Consumer installment loans</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
(Dollars in Thousands)							
10	\$ 8,592	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,010	\$ -	\$ 9,602
15	1,186	1,143	10,490	37,808	541	-	51,168
20	10,057	13,678	183,219	128,005	2,031	-	336,990
23	-	438	5,177	6,414	-	-	12,029
25	17,565	47,517	162,253	66,166	1,328	-	294,829
30	6,657	4,185	14,297	5,503	51	-	30,693
40	1,373	5,119	15,319	14,257	143	-	36,211
50	30	-	-	-	-	-	30
60	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Total	\$ 45,462	\$ 72,080	\$ 390,755	\$ 258,153	\$ 5,104	\$ -	\$ 771,554

As of December 31, 2014:

<u>Risk Grade</u>	<u>Commercial, financial & agricultural</u>	<u>Real estate - construction & development</u>	<u>Real estate - commercial & farmland</u>	<u>Real estate - residential</u>	<u>Consumer installment loans</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
(Dollars in Thousands)							
10	\$ 6,624	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 290	\$ 480	\$ -	\$ 7,394
15	1,376	522	13,277	14,051	501	-	29,727
20	13,657	12,991	116,308	64,083	1,647	-	208,686
23	73	-	3,207	3,298	-	-	6,578
25	13,753	36,230	144,293	164,959	1,920	-	361,155
30	1,618	4,365	12,279	7,444	41	-	25,747
40	910	4,254	17,342	12,184	199	-	34,889
50	30	-	-	33	-	-	63
60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$ 38,041	\$ 58,362	\$ 306,706	\$ 266,342	\$ 4,788	\$ -	\$ 674,239

The following table presents the covered loan portfolio by risk grade as of December 31, 2015 and 2014.

As of December 31, 2015:

<u>Risk Grade</u>	<u>Commercial, financial & agricultural</u>	<u>Real estate - construction & development</u>	<u>Real estate - commercial & farmland</u>	<u>Real estate - residential</u>	<u>Consumer installment loans</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
(Dollars in Thousands)							
10	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20	93	800	11,698	10,040	-	-	23,631
23	52	-	2,957	5,723	-	-	8,732
25	2,594	3,907	38,741	24,345	11	-	69,598
30	5	828	2,857	4,552	-	-	8,242
40	2,802	2,077	14,973	8,378	96	-	28,326
50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$ 5,546	\$ 7,612	\$ 71,226	\$ 53,038	\$ 107	\$ -	\$ 137,529

As of December 31, 2014:

<u>Risk Grade</u>	<u>Commercial, financial & agricultural</u>	<u>Real estate - construction & development</u>	<u>Real estate - commercial & farmland</u>	<u>Real estate - residential</u>	<u>Consumer installment loans</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
(Dollars in Thousands)							
10	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
15	-	1	761	525	-	-	1,287
20	917	3,184	23,167	14,089	77	-	41,434
23	164	537	11,404	6,642	-	-	18,747
25	5,181	9,406	80,334	33,124	37	-	128,082
30	4,808	2,753	5,302	8,050	-	-	20,913
40	10,397	7,566	26,659	16,090	104	-	60,816
50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$ 21,467	\$ 23,447	\$ 147,627	\$ 78,520	\$ 218	\$ -	\$ 271,279

Troubled Debt Restructurings

The restructuring of a loan is considered a “troubled debt restructuring” if both (i) the borrower is experiencing financial difficulties and (ii) the Company has granted a concession. Concessions may include interest rate reductions to below market interest rates, principal forgiveness, restructuring amortization schedules and other actions intended to minimize potential losses. The Company has exhibited the greatest success for rehabilitation of the loan by a reduction in the rate alone (maintaining the amortization of the debt) or a combination of a rate reduction and the forbearance of previously past due interest or principal. This has most typically been evidenced in certain commercial real estate loans whereby a disruption in the borrower’s cash flow resulted in an extended past due status, of which the borrower was unable to catch up completely as the cash flow of the property ultimately stabilized at a level lower than its original level. A reduction in rate, coupled with a forbearance of unpaid principal and/or interest, allowed the net cash flows to service the debt under the modified terms.

The Company’s policy requires a restructure request to be supported by a current, well-documented credit evaluation of the borrower’s financial condition and a collateral evaluation that is no older than six months from the date of the restructure. Key factors of that evaluation include the documentation of current, recurring cash flows, support provided by the guarantor(s) and the current valuation of the collateral. If the appraisal in file is older than six months, an evaluation must be made as to the continued reasonableness of the valuation. For certain income-producing properties, current rent rolls and/or other income information can be utilized to support the appraisal valuation, when coupled with documented cap rates within our markets and a physical inspection of the collateral to validate the current condition.

The Company's policy states in the event a loan has been identified as a troubled debt restructuring, it should be assigned a grade of substandard and placed on nonaccrual status until such time that the borrower has demonstrated the ability to service the loan payments based on the restructured terms – generally defined as six months of satisfactory payment history. Missed payments under the original loan terms are not considered under the new structure; however, subsequent missed payments are considered non-performance and are not considered toward the six month required term of satisfactory payment history. The Company's loan policy states that a nonaccrual loan may be returned to accrual status when (i) none of its principal and interest is due and unpaid, and the Company expects repayment of the remaining contractual principal and interest, or (ii) when it otherwise becomes well secured and in the process of collection. Restoration to accrual status on any given loan must be supported by a well-documented credit evaluation of the borrower's financial condition and the prospects for full repayment, approved by the Company's Chief Credit Officer.

In the normal course of business, the Company renews loans with a modification of the interest rate or terms that are not deemed as troubled debt restructurings because the borrower is not experiencing financial difficulty. The Company modified loans in 2015 and 2014 totaling \$96.5 million and \$29.1 million, respectively, under such parameters.

As of December 31, 2015 and 2014, the Company had a balance of \$16.4 million and \$15.3 million, respectively, in troubled debt restructurings, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans. The Company has recorded \$1.3 million and \$2.2 million in previous charge-offs on such loans at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively. The Company's balance in the allowance for loan losses allocated to such troubled debt restructurings was \$2.7 million and \$231,000 at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively. At December 31, 2015, the Company did not have any commitments to lend additional funds to debtors whose terms have been modified in troubled restructurings.

During the year ending December 31, 2015 and 2014, the Company modified loans as troubled debt restructurings, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, with principal balances of \$7.3 million and \$2.8 million, respectively. These modifications impacted the Company's allowance for loan losses by \$1.4 million and \$232,000 for the year ended December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively. The following table presents the loans by class modified as troubled debt restructurings, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, which occurred during the year ending December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<u>Loan class:</u>	December 31, 2015		December 31, 2014	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Commercial, financial & agricultural	7	\$ 80	6	\$ 100
Real estate – construction & development	2	15	5	264
Real estate – commercial & farmland	2	2,121	5	1,082
Real estate – residential	33	4,992	20	1,309
Consumer installment	16	61	16	67
Total	60	\$ 7,269	52	\$ 2,822

Troubled debt restructurings, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, with an outstanding balance of \$2.2 million and \$1.2 million at December 31, 2014 and 2013 defaulted during the year ended December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively, and these defaults did not have a material impact on the Company's allowance for loan loss. The following table presents the troubled debt restructurings by class that defaulted (defined as 30 days past due) during the year ending December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<u>Loan class:</u>	December 31, 2015		December 31, 2014	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Commercial, financial & agricultural	3	\$ 37	1	\$ 236
Real estate – construction & development	2	33	1	33
Real estate – commercial & farmland	3	624	2	570
Real estate – residential	20	1,493	6	314
Consumer installment	9	45	4	61
Total	37	\$ 2,232	14	\$ 1,214

The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings by loan class, excluding purchased non-covered and covered loans, classified separately as accrual and non-accrual at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<i>As of December 31, 2015</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	4	\$ 240	10	\$ 110
Real estate – construction & development	11	792	3	63
Real estate – commercial & farmland	16	5,766	3	596
Real estate – residential	51	7,574	20	1,123
Consumer installment	12	46	23	94
Total	94	\$ 14,418	59	\$ 1,986

<i>As of December 31, 2014</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	6	\$ 290	2	\$ 13
Real estate – construction & development	9	679	5	228
Real estate – commercial & farmland	19	6,477	3	724
Real estate – residential	47	5,258	11	1,485
Consumer installment	11	55	11	73
Total	92	\$ 12,759	32	\$ 2,523

As of December 31, 2015 and 2014, the Company had a balance of \$10.0 million and \$1.2 million, respectively, in troubled debt restructurings included in purchased non-covered loans. The Company has recorded \$377,000 and \$29,000, respectively, in charge-offs on such loans at December 31, 2015 and 2014. At December 31, 2015, the Company did not have any commitments to lend additional funds to debtors whose terms have been modified in troubled restructurings.

During the year ending December 31, 2015 and 2014, the Company modified purchased non-covered loans as troubled debt restructurings, with principal balances of \$2.7 million and \$1.2 million, respectively, and these modifications did not have a material impact on the Company's allowance for loan losses. The Company transferred troubled debt restructurings with principal balances of \$6.7 million from the covered loan category to the purchased non-covered loan category during the year ended December 31, 2015 due to the expiration of the loss-sharing agreements. The following table presents the purchased non-covered loans by class modified as troubled debt restructurings, which occurred during the year ending December 31, 2015 and 2014.

	December 31, 2015		December 31, 2014	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
<u>Loan class:</u>				
Commercial, financial & agricultural	2	\$ 21	-	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	2	30	1	317
Real estate – commercial & farmland	5	1,051	1	346
Real estate – residential	8	1,541	7	571
Consumer installment	3	8	1	2
Total	20	\$ 2,651	10	\$ 1,236

Troubled debt restructurings included in purchased non-covered loans with an outstanding balance of \$883,000 and \$411,000 defaulted during the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively, and these defaults did not have a material impact on the Company's allowance for loan loss. The following table presents the troubled debt restructurings by class that defaulted (defined as 30 days past due) during the year ending December 31, 2015 and 2014.

Loan class:	December 31, 2015		December 31, 2014	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Commercial, financial & agricultural	-	\$ -	-	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	2	30	1	317
Real estate – commercial & farmland	2	57	-	-
Real estate – residential	6	795	2	91
Consumer installment	1	1	1	2
Total	11	\$ 883	4	\$ 411

The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings by loan class of purchased non-covered loans, classified separately as accrual and non-accrual at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

As of December 31, 2015

Loan class:	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Commercial, financial & agricultural	1	\$ 2	2	\$ 21
Real estate – construction & development	1	363	3	42
Real estate – commercial & farmland	14	6,214	3	412
Real estate – residential	13	2,789	4	180
Consumer installment	2	5	2	3
Total	31	\$ 9,373	14	\$ 658

As of December 31, 2014

Loan class:	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Commercial, financial & agricultural	-	\$ -	-	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	1	317	-	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	1	346	-	-
Real estate – residential	6	547	1	25
Consumer installment	1	2	-	-
Total	9	\$ 1,212	1	\$ 25

As of December 31, 2015 and 2014, the Company had a balance of \$15.5 million and \$24.6 million, respectively, in troubled debt restructurings included in covered loans. The Company has recorded \$1.2 million and \$1.8 million in previous charge-offs on such loans at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively. At December 31, 2015, the Company did not have any commitments to lend additional funds to debtors whose terms have been modified in troubled restructurings.

During the year ending December 31, 2015 and 2014, the Company modified covered loans as troubled debt restructurings, with principal balances of \$2.2 million and \$4.3 million, respectively, and these modifications did not have a material impact on the Company's allowance for loan losses. The following table presents the covered loans by class modified as troubled debt restructurings, which occurred during the year ending December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<u>Loan class:</u>	December 31, 2015		December 31, 2014	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Commercial, financial & agricultural	1	\$ 1	-	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	3	334	1	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	3	1,099	7	2,489
Real estate – residential	23	745	23	1,838
Consumer installment	1	8	-	-
Total	31	\$ 2,187	31	\$ 4,327

Troubled debt restructurings included in covered loans with an outstanding balance of \$1.3 million and \$1.6 million defaulted during the year ended December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively, and these defaults did not have a material impact on the Company's allowance for loan loss. The following table presents the troubled debt restructurings by class that defaulted (defined as 30 days past due) during the year ending December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<u>Loan class:</u>	December 31, 2015		December 31, 2014	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Commercial, financial & agricultural	-	\$ -	-	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	-	-	1	14
Real estate – commercial & farmland	2	145	1	79
Real estate – residential	16	1,190	17	1,509
Consumer installment	-	-	-	-
Total	18	\$ 1,335	19	\$ 1,602

The following table presents the amount of troubled debt restructurings by loan class of covered loans, classified separately as accrual and non-accrual at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

<i>As of December 31, 2015</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Commercial, financial & agricultural	-	\$ -	2	\$ 1
Real estate – construction & development	4	779	-	-
Real estate – commercial & farmland	4	1,967	3	1,067
Real estate – residential	97	10,529	26	1,116
Consumer installment	2	8	-	-
Total	107	\$ 13,283	31	\$ 2,184

<i>As of December 31, 2014</i>	Accruing Loans		Non-Accruing Loans	
	#	Balance (in thousands)	#	Balance (in thousands)
Commercial, financial & agricultural	2	\$ 40	2	\$ -
Real estate – construction & development	4	3,037	2	29
Real estate – commercial & farmland	14	8,079	5	1,082
Real estate – residential	96	11,460	8	831
Consumer installment	1	3	-	-
Total	117	\$ 22,619	17	\$ 1,942

Related Party Loans

In the ordinary course of business, the Company has granted loans to certain directors and their affiliates. Company policy prohibits loans to executive officers. Changes in related party loans are summarized as follows:

	December 31,	
	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 4,403	\$ 5,565
Advances	162	78
Repayments	(674)	(1,240)
Transactions due to changes in related parties	(73)	-
Balance, end of year	<u>\$ 3,818</u>	<u>\$ 4,403</u>

Allowance for Loan Losses

The following table details activity in the allowance for loan losses by portfolio segment for the periods indicated. Allocation of a portion of the allowance to one category of loans does not preclude its availability to absorb losses in other categories.

	Commercial, financial & agricultural	Real estate – construction & development	Real estate – commercial & farmland	Real estate - residential	Consumer installment loans and Other	Purchased non-covered loans, including pools	Covered loans	Total
	(Dollars in Thousands)							
Twelve months ended December 31, 2015:								
Balance, January 1, 2015	\$ 2,004	\$ 5,030	\$ 8,823	\$ 4,129	\$ 1,171	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 21,157
Provision for loan losses	(73)	278	1,221	2,067	676	344	751	5,264
Loans charged off.....	(1,438)	(622)	(2,367)	(1,587)	(410)	(950)	(1,759)	(9,133)
Recoveries of loans previously charged off.....	651	323	317	151	137	1,187	1,008	3,774
Balance, December 31, 2015	<u>\$ 1,144</u>	<u>\$ 5,009</u>	<u>\$ 7,994</u>	<u>\$ 4,760</u>	<u>\$ 1,574</u>	<u>\$ 581</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 21,062</u>
Period-end amount allocated to:								
Loans individually evaluated for impairment.....	\$ 126	\$ 759	\$ 1,074	\$ 2,172	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 4,131
Loans collectively evaluated for impairment.....	1,018	4,250	6,920	2,588	1,574	581	-	16,931
Ending balance	<u>\$ 1,144</u>	<u>\$ 5,009</u>	<u>\$ 7,994</u>	<u>\$ 4,760</u>	<u>\$ 1,574</u>	<u>\$ 581</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 21,062</u>
Loans:								
Individually evaluated for impairment.....	\$ 323	\$ 1,958	\$ 11,877	\$ 9,554	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 23,712
Collectively evaluated for impairment.....	449,300	242,735	1,093,114	560,876	37,140	1,261,821	52,451	3,697,437
Acquired with deteriorated credit quality	-	-	-	-	-	102,696	85,078	187,774
Ending balance	<u>\$ 449,623</u>	<u>\$ 244,693</u>	<u>\$ 1,104,991</u>	<u>\$ 570,430</u>	<u>\$ 37,140</u>	<u>\$ 1,364,517</u>	<u>\$ 137,529</u>	<u>\$ 3,908,923</u>

	Commercial, financial & agricultural	Real estate – construction & development	Real estate – commercial & farmland	Real estate - residential	Consumer installment loans and Other	Purchased non-covered loans, including pools	Covered loans	Total
(Dollars in Thousands)								
Twelve months ended December 31, 2014:								
Balance, January 1, 2014	\$ 1,823	\$ 5,538	\$ 8,393	\$ 6,034	\$ 589	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 22,377
Provision for loan losses	1,427	(265)	3,444	(452)	567	84	843	5,648
Loans charged off.....	(1,567)	(592)	(3,288)	(1,707)	(471)	(84)	(1,851)	(9,560)
Recoveries of loans previously charged off	321	349	274	254	486	-	1,008	2,692
Balance, December 31, 2014	<u>\$ 2,004</u>	<u>\$ 5,030</u>	<u>\$ 8,823</u>	<u>\$ 4,129</u>	<u>\$ 1,171</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 21,157</u>

Period-end amount allocated to:								
Loans individually evaluated for impairment.....	\$ 375	\$ 743	\$ 1,861	\$ 911	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,890
Loans collectively evaluated for impairment	1,629	4,287	6,962	3,218	1,171	-	-	17,267
Ending balance	<u>\$ 2,004</u>	<u>\$ 5,030</u>	<u>\$ 8,823</u>	<u>\$ 4,129</u>	<u>\$ 1,171</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 21,157</u>

Loans:								
Individually evaluated for impairment.....	\$ 490	\$ 3,709	\$ 14,546	\$ 8,904	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 27,649
Collectively evaluated for impairment	319,164	157,798	892,978	447,202	45,090	579,172	122,248	2,563,652
Acquired with deteriorated credit quality	-	-	-	-	-	95,067	149,031	244,098
Ending balance	<u>\$ 319,654</u>	<u>\$ 161,507</u>	<u>\$ 907,524</u>	<u>\$ 456,106</u>	<u>\$ 45,090</u>	<u>\$ 674,239</u>	<u>\$ 271,279</u>	<u>\$ 2,835,399</u>

	Commercial, financial & agricultural	Real estate – construction & development	Real estate – commercial & farmland	Real estate - residential	Consumer installment loans and Other	Purchased non-covered loans, including pools	Covered loans	Total
(Dollars in Thousands)								
Twelve months ended December 31, 2013:								
Balance, January 1, 2013	\$ 2,439	\$ 5,343	\$ 9,157	\$ 5,898	\$ 756	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 23,593
Provision for loan losses	711	1,742	2,777	4,463	254	-	1,539	11,486
Loans charged off.....	(1,759)	(2,020)	(3,571)	(5,215)	(719)	-	(1,539)	(14,823)
Recoveries of loans previously charged off	432	473	30	888	298	-	-	2,121
Balance, December 31, 2013	<u>\$ 1,823</u>	<u>\$ 5,538</u>	<u>\$ 8,393</u>	<u>\$ 6,034</u>	<u>\$ 589</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 22,377</u>

Period-end amount allocated to:								
Loans individually evaluated for impairment.....	\$ 356	\$ 407	\$ 1,427	\$ 1,395	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,585
Loans collectively evaluated for impairment	1,467	5,131	6,966	4,639	589	-	-	18,792
Ending balance	<u>\$ 1,823</u>	<u>\$ 5,538</u>	<u>\$ 8,393</u>	<u>\$ 6,034</u>	<u>\$ 589</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 22,377</u>

Loans:								
Individually evaluated for impairment.....	\$ 3,457	\$ 3,581	\$ 15,240	\$ 16,925	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 39,203
Collectively evaluated for impairment	240,916	142,790	793,083	349,957	52,505	381,588	173,190	2,134,029
Acquired with deteriorated credit quality	-	-	-	-	-	67,165	217,047	284,212
Ending balance	<u>\$ 244,373</u>	<u>\$ 146,371</u>	<u>\$ 808,323</u>	<u>\$ 366,882</u>	<u>\$ 52,505</u>	<u>\$ 448,753</u>	<u>\$ 390,237</u>	<u>\$ 2,457,444</u>

NOTE 7. OTHER REAL ESTATE OWNED

The following is a summary of the activity in other real estate owned during years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014:

<u>(Dollars in Thousands)</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
Balance, January 1	\$ 33,160	\$ 33,351
Loans transferred to other real estate owned	11,261	11,972
Net gains (losses) on sale and write-downs	(9,971)	(4,585)
Sales proceeds.....	(18,303)	(7,578)
Ending balance.....	<u>\$ 16,147</u>	<u>\$ 33,160</u>

The following is a summary of the activity in purchased, non-covered other real estate owned during years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014:

<u>(Dollars in Thousands)</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
Balance, January 1	\$ 15,585	\$ 4,276
Loans transferred to other real estate owned	4,473	4,160
Acquired in acquisitions	2,160	8,864
Transfer from covered other real estate owned due to loss share expiration	3,148	1,226
Net gains (losses) on sale and write-downs	201	828
Sales proceeds.....	(11,234)	(3,769)
Ending balance.....	<u>\$ 14,333</u>	<u>\$ 15,585</u>

The following is a summary of the activity in covered other real estate owned during years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014:

<u>(Dollars in Thousands)</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
Balance, January 1	\$ 19,907	\$ 45,893
Loans transferred to other real estate owned	7,910	13,650
Transfer to purchased, non-covered other real estate owned due to loss share expiration.....	(3,148)	(1,226)
Net gains (losses) on sale and write-downs	(5,926)	(5,965)
Sales proceeds.....	(13,732)	(32,445)
Ending balance.....	<u>\$ 5,011</u>	<u>\$ 19,907</u>

NOTE 8. PREMISES AND EQUIPMENT

Premises and equipment are summarized as follows:

	December 31,	
	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Land	\$ 38,806	\$ 31,709
Buildings	94,310	79,692
Furniture and equipment	48,140	41,472
Construction in progress	<u>1,393</u>	<u>971</u>
	182,649	153,844
Accumulated depreciation	<u>(61,010)</u>	<u>(56,593)</u>
	<u>\$ 121,639</u>	<u>\$ 97,251</u>

Estimated costs to complete construction projects in progress were less than \$1.5 million at December 31, 2015 and 2014. Depreciation expense was approximately \$8.1 million, \$6.6 million and \$4.8 million for the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, respectively.

Leases

The Company has various operating leases with unrelated parties on 29 banking offices and seven mortgage offices. Generally, these leases are on smaller locations with initial lease terms under ten years with up to two renewal options.

Rental expense amounted to approximately \$2,962,867, \$2,189,000 and \$1,777,000 for the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, respectively. Future minimum lease commitments under the Company's operating leases, excluding any renewal options, are summarized as follows:

2016	\$ 2,999,694
2017	3,059,886
2018	2,685,184
2019	2,295,477
2020	2,074,955
Thereafter	<u>1,508,542</u>
	<u>\$14,623,738</u>

NOTE 9. GOODWILL AND INTANGIBLE ASSETS

The Company recorded \$11,210,000 of goodwill on the branch purchase from Bank of America and \$14,700,000 of goodwill on the Merchants acquisition during 2015. During 2014, the Bank recorded new goodwill totaling \$27,437,000 related to the acquisition of Coastal. The Company recorded an additional \$656,000 of goodwill during 2015 related to Coastal, for total goodwill recorded of \$28,093,000 in the Coastal acquisition. Impairment exists when a reporting unit's carrying value of goodwill exceeds its fair value. At December 31, 2015, the Company's reporting unit had positive equity and the Company elected to perform a qualitative assessment to determine if it was more likely than not that the fair value of the reporting unit exceeded its carrying value, including goodwill. The qualitative assessment indicated that it was more likely than not that the fair value of the reporting unit exceeded its carrying value, resulting in no impairment.

The Company recorded a core deposit intangible asset of \$8,636,000 associated with the branch purchase from Bank of America and \$3,943,000 associated with the Merchants acquisition during 2015. The Company recorded a core deposit intangible asset of \$4,542,000 associated with the acquisition of Coastal during 2014. The amortization period used for core deposit intangibles ranges from three to seven years. Following is a summary of information related to acquired intangible assets:

	As of December 31, 2015		As of December 31, 2014	
	Gross Amount	Accumulated Amortization	Gross Amount	Accumulated Amortization
	(Dollars in Thousands)			
Amortized intangible assets - core deposit premiums	<u>\$39,328</u>	<u>\$ 22,270</u>	<u>\$26,749</u>	<u>\$ 18,528</u>

The aggregate amortization expense for intangible assets was approximately \$3,741,000, \$2,330,000 and \$1,414,000 for the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, respectively.

The estimated amortization expense for each of the next five years is as follows (in thousands):

2016	\$ 3,721
2017	3,223
2018	3,072
2019	3,072
2020	2,430
Thereafter	1,540
	<u>\$ 17,058</u>

NOTE 10. DEPOSITS

The aggregate amount of time deposits in denominations of \$250,000 or more at December 31, 2015 and 2014 was \$131.5 million and \$135.1 million, respectively. The scheduled maturities of time deposits at December 31, 2015 are as follows:

	<u>(Dollars in Thousands)</u>
2016	\$ 673,108
2017	101,996
2018	28,531
2019	12,674
2020	17,622
Thereafter	4,475
	<u>\$ 838,406</u>

The Company did not have any brokered deposits at December 31, 2015 and 2014.

Deposits from principal officers, directors, and their affiliates at December 31, 2015 and 2014 were \$7,098,000 and \$6,018,000, respectively.

NOTE 11. SECURITIES SOLD UNDER REPURCHASE AGREEMENTS

The Company classifies the sales of securities under agreements to repurchase as short-term borrowings. The amounts received under these agreements are reflected as a liability in the Company's consolidated balance sheets and the securities underlying these agreements are included in investment securities in the Company's consolidated balance sheets. At December 31, 2015 and 2014, all securities sold under agreements to repurchase mature on a daily basis. The market value of the securities fluctuate on a daily basis due to market conditions. The Company monitors the market value of the securities underlying these agreements on a daily basis and is required to transfer additional securities if the market value of the securities fall below the repurchase agreement price. The Company maintains an unpledged securities portfolio that it believes is sufficient to protect against a decline in the market value of the securities sold under agreements to repurchase.

The following is a summary of securities sold under repurchase agreements for the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013:

	As of and For the Years Ended December 31,		
	2015	2014	2013
	(Dollars in Thousands)		
Average daily balance during the year	\$ 50,988	\$ 47,136	\$ 26,908
Average interest rate during the year	0.34%	0.35%	0.54%
Maximum month-end balance during the year	\$ 68,300	\$ 73,310	\$ 83,516
Weighted average interest rate at year-end	0.30%	0.31%	0.57%

The following is a summary of the Company's securities sold under agreements to repurchase at December 31, 2015 and 2014:

(Dollars in Thousands)	December 31, 2015	December 31, 2014
Securities sold under agreements to repurchase.....	\$ 63,585	\$ 73,310
Total.....	\$ 63,585	\$ 73,310

At December 31, 2015 and 2014, the investment securities underlying these agreements were all mortgage-backed securities.

NOTE 12. EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLANS

The Company has established a retirement plan for eligible employees. The Ameris Bancorp 401(k) Profit Sharing Plan allows a participant to defer a portion of his compensation and provides that the Company will match a portion of the deferred compensation. The Plan also provides for non-elective and discretionary contributions. All full-time and part-time employees are eligible to participate in the Plan provided they have met the eligibility requirements. Generally, a participant must have completed 12 months of employment with a minimum of 1,000 hours and have attained an age of 21.

The aggregate expense under the plan charged to operations during 2015, 2014 and 2013 amounted to \$1,430,000, \$1,160,000 and \$839,000, respectively.

NOTE 13. DEFERRED COMPENSATION PLANS

The Company and the Bank have entered into separate deferred compensation arrangements and supplemental executive retirement plans with certain executive officers and directors. The plans call for certain amounts payable at retirement, death or disability. The estimated present value of the deferred compensation is being accrued over the expected service period. The Company and the Bank have purchased life insurance policies which they intend to use to fund these liabilities. The cash surrender value of the life insurance was \$64.3 million and \$58.9 million at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively. Accrued deferred compensation of \$991,000 and \$655,000 at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively, is included in other liabilities. Accrued supplemental executive retirement plan liabilities of \$2,443,000 and \$1,594,000 at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively, is included in other liabilities. Aggregate compensation expense under the plans was \$849,000, \$743,000 and \$601,000 per year for 2015, 2014 and 2013, respectively, which is included in salaries and employee benefits.

NOTE 14. OTHER BORROWINGS

Other borrowings consist of the following:

	December 31,	
	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Daily Rate Credit from Federal Home Loan Bank with a fixed interest rate of 0.36%.	\$ -	\$ 35,000
Advances under revolving credit agreement with a regional bank with interest at 90-day LIBOR plus 3.50% (3.92% at December 31, 2015 and 3.73% at December 31, 2014) due in August 2016, secured by subsidiary bank stock.	24,000	24,000
Advance from correspondent bank with a fixed interest rate of 4.50%, due November 27, 2017, secured by subsidiary bank loan receivable.	-	4,881
Subordinated debt issued by The Prosperity Banking Company due September 2016 with an interest rate of 90-day LIBOR plus 1.75% (2.28% at December 31, 2015 and 1.99% at December 31, 2014).	15,000	15,000
	<u>\$ 39,000</u>	<u>\$ 78,881</u>

The contractual balance of the subordinated debt issued by The Prosperity Banking Company is \$15.0 million. The debt was recorded at a discount at acquisition, and that discount was fully accreted by December 31, 2014.

The advances from the FHLB are collateralized by a blanket lien on all eligible first mortgage loans and other specific loans in addition to FHLB stock. At December 31, 2015, \$325.9 million was available for borrowing on lines with the FHLB.

At December 31, 2015, \$16.0 million was available for borrowing under the revolving credit agreement with a regional bank, secured by subsidiary bank stock.

As of December 31, 2015, the Company maintained credit arrangements with various financial institutions to purchase federal funds up to \$55 million.

The Company also participates in the Federal Reserve discount window borrowings. At December 31, 2015, the Company had \$708.4 million of loans pledged at the Federal Reserve discount window and had \$474.8 million available for borrowing.

NOTE 15. PREFERRED STOCK

On November 21, 2008, Ameris sold 52,000 shares of preferred stock with a warrant to purchase 679,443 shares of the Company's common stock to the U.S. Treasury under the Treasury's Capital Purchase Program. The proceeds from the sale of \$52 million were allocated between the preferred stock and the warrant based on their relative fair values at the time of the sale. Of the \$52 million in proceeds, \$48.98 million was allocated to the preferred stock and \$3.02 million was allocated to the warrant. The discount recorded on the preferred stock that resulted from allocating a portion of the proceeds to the warrant was accreted as a portion of the preferred stock dividends in the consolidated statements of income to arrive at net income (loss) available to common shareholders.

The preferred stock qualified as Tier I capital and paid cumulative dividends at a rate of 5% per annum for the first five years and 9% per annum thereafter. The preferred stock was redeemable at any time at \$1,000 per share plus any accrued and unpaid dividends with the consent of the Company's primary federal regulator.

On June 14, 2012, the preferred stock was sold by the Treasury through a registered public offering. The sale of the preferred stock to new investors did not result in any accounting entries and did not change the Company's capital position. On August 22, 2012, the Company repurchased the warrant from the Treasury for \$2.67 million. During the fourth quarter of 2012, the Company repurchased 24,000 shares of the outstanding preferred stock at par, leaving 28,000 shares of preferred stock outstanding at December 31, 2013. During the first quarter of 2014, the Company repurchased the remaining 28,000 shares of the outstanding preferred stock at par.

NOTE 16. INCOME TAXES

The income tax expense in the consolidated statements of income consists of the following:

	For the Years Ended December 31,		
	2015	2014	2013
	(Dollars in Thousands)		
Current – federal	\$ 15,215	\$ 10,499	\$ 5,237
Current - state	1,026	467	505
Deferred - federal	(344)	6,516	3,543
	<u>\$ 15,897</u>	<u>\$ 17,482</u>	<u>\$ 9,285</u>

The Company's income tax expense differs from the amounts computed by applying the federal income tax statutory rates to income before income taxes. A reconciliation of the differences is as follows:

	For the Years Ended December 31,		
	2015	2014	2013
	(Dollars in Thousands)		
Tax at federal income tax rate	\$ 19,860	\$ 19,672	\$ 10,256
Change resulting from:			
Tax-exempt interest	(2,490)	(1,647)	(841)
Increase in cash value of bank owned life insurance	(484)	(568)	(446)
State income tax, net of federal benefit	667	304	328
Other	(1,656)	(279)	(12)
Provision for income taxes	<u>\$ 15,897</u>	<u>\$ 17,482</u>	<u>\$ 9,285</u>

Net deferred income tax assets of \$19,459,000 and \$17,784,000 at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively, are included in other assets. The components of deferred income taxes are as follows:

	December 31,	
	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Deferred tax assets:		
Allowance for loan losses	\$ 7,372	\$ 7,405
Deferred compensation	1,202	787
Deferred gain on interest rate swap	381	477
Unrealized loss on interest rate swap	504	460
Nonaccrual interest	49	153
Purchase accounting adjustments	10,825	13,241
Goodwill and intangible assets	9,357	9,565
Other real estate owned	8,597	8,982
Net operating loss tax carryforward	11,179	12,146
Capitalized costs, accrued expenses and other	200	1,469
	<u>49,666</u>	<u>54,685</u>
Deferred tax liabilities:		
Depreciation and amortization	5,591	4,821
Mortgage servicing rights	715	539
Subordinated debentures	7,732	7,159
FDIC-assisted transaction adjustments	14,446	21,372
Unrealized gain on securities available for sale	1,723	3,010
	<u>30,207</u>	<u>36,901</u>
Net deferred tax asset	<u>\$19,459</u>	<u>\$17,784</u>

At December 31, 2015, the Company had federal net operating loss carryforwards of approximately \$31.90 million which expire at various dates from 2028 to 2033. At December 31, 2014, the Company had federal net operating loss carryforwards of approximately \$34.0 million which expire at various dates from 2028 to 2033. Deferred tax assets are recognized for net operating losses because the benefit is more likely than not to be realized.

The Company did not record any interest and penalties related to income taxes for the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, and the Company did not have any amount accrued for interest and penalties at December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013.

The Company and its subsidiaries are subject to U.S. federal income tax as well as income tax of the various states. The Company is no longer subject to examination by taxing authorities for years before 2012.

NOTE 17. SUBORDINATED DEFERRABLE INTEREST DEBENTURES

During 2005, the Company acquired First National Banc Statutory Trust I, a statutory trust subsidiary of First National Banc, Inc., whose sole purpose was to issue \$5,000,000 principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 2.80% (3.13% at December 31, 2015) through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. The trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date beginning in April 2009. There are certain circumstances (as described in the trust agreement) in which the securities may be redeemed within the first five years at the Company's option. The aggregate principal amount of trust preferred certificates outstanding at December 31, 2015 was \$5,000,000. The aggregate principal amount of debentures outstanding was \$5,155,000. The Company's investment in the common stock of the trust was \$155,000 and is included in other assets.

During 2006, the Company formed Ameris Statutory Trust I, issuing trust preferred certificates in the aggregate principal amount of \$36,000,000. The related debentures issued by the Company were in the aggregate principal amount of \$37,114,000. Both the trust preferred securities and the related debentures bear interest at 3-Month LIBOR plus 1.63% (2.14% at December 31, 2015). Distributions on the trust preferred securities are paid quarterly, with interest on the debentures being paid on the corresponding dates. The trust preferred securities mature on December 15, 2036 and are redeemable at the Company's option beginning September 15, 2011. The Company's investment in the common stock of the trust was \$1,114,000 and is included in other assets.

During 2013, the Company acquired Prosperity Banking Capital Trust I, a statutory trust subsidiary of Prosperity, whose sole purpose was to issue \$5,000,000 principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 2.57% (3.17% at December 31, 2015) through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. The trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date beginning in July 2009. The aggregate principal amount of trust preferred certificates outstanding at December 31, 2015 was \$5,000,000. The aggregate principal amount of debentures outstanding was \$5,155,000, and is being carried at fair value of \$3,260,000 on the Company's balance sheet. The Company's investment in the common stock of the trust was \$155,000 and is included in other assets.

During 2013, the Company acquired Prosperity Bank Statutory Trust II, a statutory trust subsidiary of Prosperity, whose sole purpose was to issue \$4,500,000 principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 3.15% (3.75% at December 31, 2015) through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. The trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date beginning in March 2008. The aggregate principal amount of trust preferred certificates outstanding at December 31, 2015 was \$4,500,000. The aggregate principal amount of debentures outstanding was \$4,640,000, and is being carried at fair value of \$3,275,000 on the Company's balance sheet. The Company's investment in the common stock of the trust was \$140,000 and is included in other assets.

During 2013, the Company acquired Prosperity Bank Statutory Trust III, a statutory trust subsidiary of Prosperity, whose sole purpose was to issue \$10,000,000 principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 1.60% (2.11% at December 31, 2015) through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. The trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date beginning in March 2011. The aggregate principal amount of trust preferred certificates outstanding at December 31, 2015 was \$10,000,000. The aggregate principal amount of debentures outstanding was \$10,310,000, and is being carried at fair value of \$5,230,000 on the Company's balance sheet. The Company's investment in the common stock of the trust was \$310,000 and is included in other assets.

During 2013, the Company acquired Prosperity Bank Statutory Trust IV, a statutory trust subsidiary of Prosperity, whose sole purpose was to issue \$10,000,000 principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 1.54% (2.05% at December 31, 2015) through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. The trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date beginning in December 2012. The aggregate principal amount of trust preferred certificates outstanding at December 31, 2015 was \$5,000,000. The aggregate principal amount of debentures outstanding was \$5,155,000, and is being carried at fair value of \$2,730,000 on the Company's balance sheet. The Company's investment in the common stock of the trust was \$310,000 and is included in other assets.

During 2014, the Company acquired Coastal Bankshares Statutory Trust I, a statutory trust subsidiary of Coastal, whose sole purpose was to issue \$5,000,000 principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 3.15% (3.47% at December 31, 2015) through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. The trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date beginning in October 2008. The aggregate principal amount of trust preferred certificates outstanding at December 31, 2015 was \$5,000,000. The aggregate principal amount of debentures outstanding was \$5,155,000, and is being carried at fair value of \$3,781,000 on the Company's balance sheet. The Company's investment in the common stock of the trust was \$155,000 and is included in other assets.

During 2014, the Company acquired Coastal Bankshares Statutory Trust II, a statutory trust subsidiary of Coastal, whose sole purpose was to issue \$10,000,000 principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 1.60% (2.11% at December 31, 2015) through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. The trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date beginning in December 2010. The aggregate principal amount of trust preferred certificates outstanding at December 31, 2015 was \$10,000,000. The aggregate principal amount of debentures outstanding was \$10,310,000, and is being carried at fair value of \$5,747,000 on the Company's balance sheet. The Company's investment in the common stock of the trust was \$310,000 and is included in other assets.

During 2015, the Company acquired Merchants & Southern Statutory Trust I, a statutory trust subsidiary of Merchants, whose sole purpose was to issue \$3,000,000 principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 1.90% (2.43% at December 31, 2015) through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. The trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date beginning in March 2010. The aggregate principal amount of trust preferred certificates outstanding at December 31, 2015 was \$3,000,000. The aggregate principal amount of debentures outstanding was \$3,093,000, and is being carried at fair value of \$1,878,000 on the Company's balance sheet. The Company's investment in the common stock of the trust was \$93,000 and is included in other assets.

During 2015, the Company acquired Merchants & Southern Statutory Trust II, a statutory trust subsidiary of Merchants, whose sole purpose was to issue \$3,000,000 principal amount of trust preferred securities at a rate per annum equal to the 3-Month LIBOR plus 1.50% (2.01% at December 31, 2015) through a pool sponsored by a national brokerage firm. The trust preferred securities have a maturity of 30 years and are redeemable at the Company's option on any quarterly interest payment date beginning in June 2011. The aggregate principal amount of trust preferred certificates outstanding at December 31, 2015 was \$3,000,000. The aggregate principal amount of debentures outstanding was \$3,093,000, and is being carried at fair value of \$1,704,000 on the Company's balance sheet. The Company's investment in the common stock of the trust was \$93,000 and is included in other assets.

Under applicable accounting standards, the assets and liabilities of such trusts, as well as the related income and expenses, are excluded from the Company's consolidated financial statements. However, the subordinated debentures issued by the Company and purchased by the trusts remain on the consolidated balance sheets. In addition, the related interest expense continues to be included in the consolidated statements of income. For regulatory capital purposes, the trust preferred securities qualify as a component of Tier 1 Capital.

NOTE 18. STOCK-BASED COMPENSATION

The Company awards its employees and directors various forms of stock-based incentives under certain plans approved by its shareholders. Awards granted under the plans may be in the form of qualified or nonqualified stock options, restricted stock, stock appreciation rights ("SARs"), long-term incentive compensation units consisting of cash and common stock, or any combination thereof within the limitations set forth in the plans. The plans provide that the aggregate number of shares of the Company's common stock which may be subject to award may not exceed 2,985,000 subject to adjustment in certain circumstances to prevent dilution. At December 31, 2015, there were 1,120,000 shares available to be issued under the plans.

All stock options have an exercise price that is equal to the closing fair market value of the Company's stock on the date the options were granted. Options granted under the plans generally vest over a five-year period and have a 10-year maximum term. Most options granted since 2005 contain performance-based vesting conditions.

The Company did not grant any options during 2015, 2014 or 2013. As of December 31, 2015, there was no unrecognized compensation cost related to nonvested share-based compensation arrangements granted related to performance or non-performance-based options.

As of December 31, 2015, the Company has 285,326 outstanding restricted shares granted under the plans as compensation to certain employees. These shares carry dividend and voting rights. Sales of these shares are restricted prior to the date of vesting, which is three to five years from the date of the grant. Shares issued under the plans are recorded at their fair market value on the date of their grant. The compensation expense is recognized on a straight-line basis over the related vesting period. In 2015, 2014 and 2013, compensation expense related to these grants was approximately \$1,485,000, \$2,058,000 and \$1,041,000, respectively. The total income tax benefit related to these grants was approximately \$1,069,000, \$861,000 and \$152,000 in 2015, 2014 and 2013, respectively.

It is the Company's policy to issue new shares for stock option exercises and restricted stock rather than issue treasury shares. The Company recognizes stock-based compensation expense on a straight-line basis over the options' related vesting term. The Company did not record any stock-based compensation expense related to stock options during 2015, 2014 and 2013. The total income tax benefit related to stock options was approximately \$102,000 and \$49,000 in 2015 and 2014, respectively. There was no income tax benefit related to stock options in 2013.

The fair value of each stock-based compensation grant is estimated on the date of grant using the Black-Scholes option-pricing model.

A summary of the activity of non-performance-based and performance-based options as of December 31, 2015 is presented below:

	Non-Performance-Based			Performance-Based				
	Shares	Weighted-Average Exercise Price	Weighted Average Contractual Term	Aggregate Intrinsic Value \$ (000)	Shares	Weighted-Average Exercise Price	Weighted Average Contractual Term	Aggregate Intrinsic Value \$ (000)
Under option, beginning of year	88,111	\$ 18.00			359,331	\$ 16.74		
Granted	-	-			-	-		
Exercised	(15,628)	15.47		\$ 242	(59,507)	15.39		\$ 916
Forfeited	-	-			(75,691)	17.37		
Under option, end of year	<u>72,483</u>	\$ 18.55	2.13	\$ 1,331	<u>224,132</u>	\$ 16.92	1.80	\$ 3,697
Exercisable at end of year	<u>72,483</u>	\$ 18.55	2.13	\$ 1,331	<u>189,587</u>	\$ 15.91	2.06	\$ 3,252

A summary of the activity of non- performance-based and performance-based options as of December 31, 2014 is presented below:

	Non-Performance-Based			Performance-Based				
	Shares	Weighted-Average Exercise Price	Weighted Average Contractual Term	Aggregate Intrinsic Value \$ (000)	Shares	Weighted-Average Exercise Price	Weighted Average Contractual Term	Aggregate Intrinsic Value \$ (000)
Under option, beginning of year	115,459	\$ 17.24			371,000	\$ 16.76		
Granted	-	-			-	-		
Exercised	(25,395)	14.81		\$ 148	(6,477)	11.05		\$ 72
Forfeited	<u>(1,953)</u>	14.88			<u>(5,192)</u>	25.51		
Under option, end of year	<u>88,111</u>	\$ 18.00	2.71	\$ 884	<u>359,331</u>	\$ 16.74	2.11	\$ 2,955
Exercisable at end of year	<u>88,111</u>	\$ 18.00	2.71	\$ 884	<u>341,030</u>	\$ 17.23	2.00	\$ 2,629

A summary of the activity of non- performance-based and performance-based options as of December 31, 2013 is presented below:

	Non-Performance-Based			Performance-Based				
	Shares	Weighted-Average Exercise Price	Weighted Average Contractual Term	Aggregate Intrinsic Value \$ (000)	Shares	Weighted-Average Exercise Price	Weighted Average Contractual Term	Aggregate Intrinsic Value \$ (000)
Under option, beginning of year	148,498	\$ 16.37			391,321	\$ 16.43		
Granted	-	-			-	-		
Exercised	(27,657)	13.29		\$ 107	(4,524)	7.47		\$ 42
Forfeited	<u>(5,382)</u>	13.43			<u>(15,797)</u>	13.22		
Under option, end of year	<u>115,459</u>	\$ 17.24	3.04	\$ 641	<u>371,000</u>	\$ 16.76	3.12	\$ 1,401
Exercisable at end of year	<u>115,459</u>	\$ 17.24	3.04	\$ 641	<u>351,856</u>	\$ 17.27	3.01	\$ 1,145

A summary of the status of the Company's restricted stock awards as of and for the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013 is presented below:

	2015		2014		2013	
	Shares	Weighted-Average Grant-Date Fair Value	Shares	Weighted-Average Grant-Date Fair Value	Shares	Weighted-Average Grant-Date Fair Value
Nonvested shares at beginning of year	323,151	\$ 13.46	377,725	\$ 11.78	295,075	\$ 10.47
Granted	71,000	23.46	82,047	20.99	108,400	14.77
Vested	(108,825)	9.96	(126,050)	13.12	(21,750)	9.31
Forfeited	-	-	(10,571)	15.61	(4,000)	9.88
Nonvested shares at end of year	<u>285,326</u>	17.29	<u>323,151</u>	13.46	<u>377,725</u>	11.78

The balance of unearned compensation related to restricted stock grants as of December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013 was approximately \$1,749,000, \$1,568,000 and \$2,129,000, respectively. At December 31, 2015, the cost is expected to be recognized over a weighted-average period of 2.0 years.

NOTE 19. DERIVATIVE INSTRUMENTS AND HEDGING ACTIVITIES

During 2010, the Company entered into an interest rate swap to lock in a fixed rate as opposed to the contractual variable interest rate on the junior subordinated debentures. The interest rate swap contract has a notional amount of \$37.1 million and is hedging the variable rate on the junior subordinated debentures described in Note 17 of the consolidated financial statements. The Company receives a variable rate of the 90-day LIBOR rate plus 1.63% and pays a fixed rate of 4.11%. The swap matures in September 2020.

This contract is classified as a cash flow hedge of an exposure to changes in the cash flow of a recognized liability. At December 31, 2015 and 2014, the fair value of the remaining instrument totaled a liability of \$1,439,000 and \$1,315,000, respectively. As a cash flow hedge, the change in fair value of a hedge that is deemed to be highly effective is recognized in other comprehensive income and the portion deemed to be ineffective is recognized in earnings. As of December 31, 2015, the hedge is deemed to be highly effective.

Mortgage Banking Derivatives

The Company maintains a risk management program to manage interest rate risk and pricing risk associated with its mortgage lending activities. This program includes the use of forward contracts and other derivatives that are used to offset changes in value of the mortgage inventory due to changes in market interest rates. As a normal part of its operations, the Company enters into derivative contracts such as forward sale commitments and IRLCs to economically hedge risks associated with overall price risk related to IRLCs and mortgage loans held for sale carried at fair value. These mortgage banking derivatives are not designated in hedge relationships. At December 31, 2015, the Company had approximately \$77.7 million of IRLCs and \$74.5 million of forward commitments for the future delivery of residential mortgage loans. The fair value of these mortgage banking derivatives was reflected as a derivative asset of \$2.7 million and a derivative liability of \$137,000. At December 31, 2014, the Company had approximately \$38.9 million of IRLCs and \$46.5 million of forward commitments for the future delivery of residential mortgage loans. The fair value of these mortgage banking derivatives was reflected as a derivative asset of \$1.8 million and a derivative liability of \$249,000. Fair values were estimated based on changes in mortgage interest rates from the date of the commitments. Changes in the fair values of these mortgage-banking derivatives are included in net gains on sales of loans.

The net gains (losses) relating to free-standing derivative instruments used for risk management are summarized below as of December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013:

	<u>Location</u>	<u>December 31, 2015</u>	<u>December 31, 2014</u>	<u>December 31, 2013</u>
(Dollars in Thousands)				
Forward contracts related to mortgage loans held for sale.....	Mortgage banking activity	\$ (137)	\$ (249)	\$ 98
Interest rate lock commitments	Mortgage banking activity	\$ 2,687	\$ 1,757	\$ 1,082

The following table reflects the amount and market value of mortgage banking derivatives included in the Consolidated Balance Sheets as of December 31, 2015 and 2014:

	<u>2015</u>		<u>2014</u>	
	<u>Notional Amount</u>	<u>Fair Value</u>	<u>Notional Amount</u>	<u>Fair Value</u>
(Dollars in Thousands)				
Included in other assets:				
Forward contracts related to mortgage loans held for sale	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Interest rate lock commitments.....	<u>77,710</u>	<u>2,687</u>	<u>38,868</u>	<u>1,757</u>
Total included in other assets	<u>\$ 77,710</u>	<u>\$ 2,687</u>	<u>\$38,868</u>	<u>\$ 1,757</u>
Included in other liabilities:				
Forward contracts related to mortgage loans held for sale	\$123,500	\$ 137	\$46,500	\$ 249
Interest rate lock commitments.....	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total included in other liabilities	<u>\$123,500</u>	<u>\$ 137</u>	<u>\$46,500</u>	<u>\$ 249</u>

NOTE 20. COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

Loan Commitments

The Company is a party to financial instruments with off-balance-sheet risk in the normal course of business to meet the financing needs of its customers. These financial instruments include commitments to extend credit and standby letters of credit. They involve, to varying degrees, elements of credit risk and interest rate risk in excess of the amount recognized in the balance sheets.

The Company's exposure to credit loss is represented by the contractual amount of those instruments. The Company uses the same credit policies in making commitments and conditional obligations as it does for on-balance-sheet instruments. A summary of the Company's commitments is as follows:

	<u>December 31,</u>	
	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
(Dollars in Thousands)		
Commitments to extend credit	\$ 548,898	\$ 293,517
Unused lines of credit	52,798	49,567
Financial standby letters of credit	14,712	9,683
Mortgage interest rate lock commitments	77,710	38,868

Commitments to extend credit are agreements to lend to a customer as long as there is no violation of any condition established in the contract. Commitments generally have fixed expiration dates or other termination clauses and may require payment of a fee. Since many of the commitments are expected to expire without being drawn upon, the total commitment amounts do not necessarily represent future cash requirements. The amount of collateral obtained, if deemed necessary by the Company upon extension of credit, is based on management's credit evaluation of the customer.

Standby letters of credit are conditional commitments issued by the Company to guarantee the performance of a customer to a third party. Those guarantees are primarily issued to support public and private borrowing arrangements. The credit risk involved in issuing letters of credit is essentially the same as that involved in extending loans to customers. Collateral is required in instances which the Company deems necessary. The Company has not been required to perform on any material financial standby letters of credit and the Company has not incurred any losses on financial standby letters of credit for the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014.

Contingencies

Certain conditions may exist as of the date the financial statements are issued, which may result in a loss to the Company but which will only be resolved when one or more future events occur or fail to occur. The Company's management and its legal counsel assess such contingent liabilities, and such assessment inherently involves an exercise of judgment. In assessing loss contingencies related to legal proceedings that are pending against the Company or unasserted claims that may result in such proceedings, the Company's legal counsel evaluates the perceived merits of any legal proceedings or unasserted claims as well as the perceived merits of the amount of relief sought or expected to be sought therein.

If the assessment of a contingency indicates that it is probable that a material loss has been incurred and the amount of the liability can be estimated, then the estimated liability would be accrued in the Company's financial statements. If the assessment indicates that a potentially material loss contingency is not probable, but is reasonably possible, or is probable but cannot be estimated, then the nature of the contingent liability, together with an estimate of the range of possible loss if determinable and material, would be disclosed.

Loss contingencies considered remote are generally not disclosed unless they involve guarantees, in which case the nature of the guarantee would be disclosed.

A former borrower of the Company has filed a claim related to a loan previously made by the Company asserting lender liability. The case was tried without a jury and an order was issued by the court against the Company awarding the borrower approximately \$2.9 million on August 8, 2013. The order is currently on appeal to the South Carolina Court of Appeals and the Company is asserting it had no fiduciary responsibility to the borrower. As of December 31, 2015, the Company believes that it has valid bases in law and fact to overturn the verdict on appeal. As a result, the Company believes that the likelihood that the amount of the judgment will be affirmed is not probable, and, accordingly, that the amount of any loss cannot be reasonably estimated at this time. Because the Company believes that this potential loss is not probable or estimable, it has not recorded any reserves or contingencies related to this legal matter. In the event that the Company's assumptions used to evaluate this matter as neither probable nor estimable change in future periods, it may be required to record a liability for an adverse outcome.

NOTE 21. REGULATORY MATTERS

The Bank is subject to certain restrictions on the amount of dividends that may be declared without prior regulatory approval. At December 31, 2015, \$22.4 million of retained earnings were available for dividend declaration without regulatory approval.

The Company and the Bank are subject to various regulatory capital requirements administered by the federal banking agencies. Failure to meet minimum capital requirements can initiate certain mandatory, and possibly additional discretionary, actions by regulators that, if undertaken, could have a direct material effect on the Company's and Bank's financial statements. Under capital adequacy guidelines and the regulatory framework for prompt corrective action, the Company and the Bank must meet specific capital guidelines that involve quantitative measures of their assets, liabilities and certain off-balance-sheet items as calculated under regulatory accounting practices. Capital amounts and classification are also subject to qualitative judgments by the regulators about components, risk weightings and other factors.

Quantitative measures established by regulation to ensure capital adequacy require the Company and the Bank to maintain minimum amounts and ratios of total, Tier I capital and Common Equity Tier 1 capital, as defined by the regulations, to risk-weighted assets, as defined, and of Tier I capital to average assets, as defined. Management believes that, as of December 31, 2015 and 2014, the Company and the Bank met all capital adequacy requirements to which they are subject.

As of December 31, 2015 and 2014, the most recent notification from the regulatory authorities categorized the Bank as well capitalized under the regulatory framework for prompt corrective action. To be categorized as well capitalized, the Bank must maintain minimum total risk-based, Tier I risk-based, Common Equity Tier I risk-based and Tier I leverage ratios as set forth in the following table. There are no conditions or events since that notification that management believes have changed the Bank's category. Prompt corrective action provisions are not applicable to bank holding companies.

The Company's and Bank's actual capital amounts and ratios are presented in the following table.

	Actual		For Capital Adequacy Purposes		To Be Well Capitalized Under Prompt Corrective Action Provisions	
	Amount	Ratio	Amount	Ratio	Amount	Ratio
(Dollars in Thousands)						
As of December 31, 2015						
Total Capital to Risk Weighted Assets						
Consolidated	\$ 484,023	11.45%	\$ 338,057	8.00%		—N/A—
Ameris Bank	\$ 516,677	12.24%	\$ 337,687	8.00%	\$ 422,109	10.00%
Tier I Capital to Risk Weighted Assets:						
Consolidated	\$ 462,961	10.96%	\$ 253,543	6.00%		—N/A—
Ameris Bank	\$ 495,615	11.74%	\$ 253,266	6.00%	\$ 337,687	8.00%
Common Equity Tier 1 Capital to Risk Weighted Assets:						
Consolidated	\$ 403,322	9.54%	\$ 190,157	4.50%		—N/A—
Ameris Bank	\$ 495,615	11.74%	\$ 189,949	4.50%	\$ 274,371	6.50%
Tier I Capital to Average Assets:						
Consolidated	\$ 462,961	8.70%	\$ 212,771	4.00%		—N/A—
Ameris Bank	\$ 495,615	9.32%	\$ 212,608	4.00%	\$ 265,760	5.00%
As of December 31, 2014						
Total Capital to Risk Weighted Assets						
Consolidated	\$ 373,310	13.42%	\$ 222,557	8.00%		—N/A—
Ameris Bank	\$ 414,356	14.90%	\$ 222,528	8.00%	\$ 278,160	10.00%
Tier I Capital to Risk Weighted Assets:						
Consolidated	\$ 352,153	12.66%	\$ 111,279	4.00%		—N/A—
Ameris Bank	\$ 393,199	14.14%	\$ 111,264	4.00%	\$ 166,896	6.00%
Tier I Capital to Average Assets:						
Consolidated	\$ 352,153	8.94%	\$ 157,574	4.00%		—N/A—
Ameris Bank	\$ 393,199	10.01%	\$ 157,165	4.00%	\$ 196,456	5.00%

NOTE 22. FAIR VALUE OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The fair value of a financial instrument is the current amount that would be exchanged between willing parties, other than in a forced liquidation. Fair value is best determined based upon quoted market prices. However, in many instances, there are no quoted market prices for the Company's various financial instruments. In cases where quoted market prices are not available, fair value is based on discounted cash flows or other valuation techniques. These techniques are significantly affected by the assumptions used, including the discount rate and estimates of future cash flows. Accordingly, the fair value estimates may not be realized in an immediate settlement of the instrument. The accounting standard for disclosures about the fair value of financial instruments excludes certain financial instruments and all nonfinancial instruments from its disclosure requirements. Accordingly, the aggregate fair value amounts presented may not necessarily represent the underlying fair value of the Company.

The Company has elected to record mortgage loans held-for-sale at fair value in order to eliminate the complexities and inherent difficulties of achieving hedge accounting and to better align reported results with the underlying economic changes in value of the loans and related hedge instruments. This election impacts the timing and recognition of origination fees and costs, as well as servicing value, which are now recognized in earnings at the time of origination. Interest income on mortgage loans held-for-sale is recorded on an accrual basis in the consolidated statement of earnings and comprehensive income under the heading "Interest income – interest and fees on loans". The servicing value is included in the fair value of the IRLCs with borrowers. The mark to market adjustments related to loans held-for-sale and the associated economic hedges are captured in mortgage banking activities. Net gains of \$3.5 million, \$4.3 million and \$1.7 million resulting from fair value changes of these mortgage loans were recorded in income during the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, respectively. The amount does not reflect changes in fair values of related derivative instruments used to hedge exposure to market-related risks associated with these mortgage loans. The change in fair value of both mortgage loans held for sale and the related derivative instruments are recorded in "Mortgage banking activity" in the Consolidated Statements of Earnings and Comprehensive Income. The Company's valuation of mortgage loans held for sale incorporates an assumption for credit risk; however, given the short-term period that the Company holds these loans, valuation adjustments attributable to instrument-specific credit risk is nominal.

The following table summarizes the difference between the fair value and the principal balance for mortgage loans held for sale measured at fair value as of December 31, 2015 and 2014:

	December 31,	
	2015	2014
	(Dollars in Thousands)	
Aggregate Fair Value of Mortgage Loans held for sale	\$ 111,182	\$ 94,759
Aggregate Unpaid Principal Balance	\$ 107,652	\$ 90,418
Past due loans of 90 days or more	\$ -	\$ -
Nonaccrual loans	\$ -	\$ -

The Company utilizes fair value measurements to record fair value adjustments to certain assets and liabilities and to determine fair value disclosures. Securities available for sale and derivatives are recorded at fair value on a recurring basis. From time to time, the Company may be required to record at fair value other assets on a nonrecurring basis, such as impaired loans and OREO. Additionally, the Company is required to disclose, but not record, the fair value of other financial instruments.

Fair Value Hierarchy

The Company groups assets and liabilities at fair value in three levels, based on the markets in which the assets and liabilities are traded and the reliability of the assumptions used to determine fair value. These levels are:

Level 1 – Quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities.

Level 2 – Observable inputs other than Level 1 prices, such as quoted prices for similar assets or liabilities; quoted prices in markets that are not active; or other inputs that are observable or can be corroborated by observable market data for substantially the full term of the assets or liabilities.

Level 3 – Unobservable inputs that are supported by little or no market activity and that are significant to the fair value of the assets or liabilities.

The following methods and assumptions were used by the Company in estimating the fair value of its financial instruments and other accounts recorded or disclosed based on their fair value:

Cash, Due From Banks, Interest-Bearing Deposits in Banks and Federal Funds Sold: The carrying amount of cash, due from banks, interest-bearing deposits in banks and federal funds sold approximates fair value.

Securities Available For Sale: The fair value of securities available for sale is determined by various valuation methodologies. Where quoted market prices are available in an active market, securities are classified within Level 1 of the valuation hierarchy. If quoted market prices are not available, then fair values are estimated by using pricing models, quoted prices of securities with similar characteristics, or discounted cash flows. Level 2 securities include certain U.S. agency bonds, collateralized mortgage and debt obligations and certain municipal securities. The level 2 fair value pricing is provided by an independent third party and is based upon similar securities in an active market. In certain cases where Level 1 or Level 2 inputs are not available, securities are classified within Level 3 of the hierarchy and include certain residual municipal securities and other less liquid securities.

Other Investments: FHLB and FRB stock is included in other investment securities at its original cost basis, as cost approximates fair value and there is no ready market for such investments. It is not practical to determine the fair value of FHLB and FRB stock due to restrictions placed on its transferability.

Mortgage Loans Held-for-Sale: The Company records mortgage loans held for sale at fair value. The fair value of mortgage loans held for sale is determined on outstanding commitments from third party investors in the secondary markets and is classified within Level 2 of the valuation hierarchy.

Loans: The carrying amount of variable-rate loans that reprice frequently and have no significant change in credit risk approximates fair value. The fair value of fixed-rate loans is estimated based on discounted contractual cash flows, using interest rates currently being offered for loans with similar terms to borrowers with similar credit quality. The fair value of impaired loans is estimated based on discounted contractual cash flows or underlying collateral values, where applicable. A loan is determined to be impaired if the Company believes it is probable that all principal and interest amounts due according to the terms of the note will not be collected as scheduled. The fair value of impaired loans is determined in accordance with ASC 310-10, *Accounting by Creditors for Impairment of a Loan*, and generally results in a specific reserve established through a charge to the provision for loan losses. Losses on impaired loans are charged to the allowance when management believes the uncollectability of a loan is confirmed. Management has determined that the majority of impaired loans are Level 3 assets due to the extensive use of market appraisals.

Other Real Estate Owned: The fair value of other real estate owned (“OREO”) is determined using certified appraisals, internal evaluations and broker price opinions that value the property at its highest and best uses by applying traditional valuation methods common to the industry. The Company does not hold any OREO for profit purposes and all other real estate is actively marketed for sale. In most cases, management has determined that additional write-downs are required beyond what is calculable from the appraisal to carry the property at levels that would attract buyers. Because this additional write-down is not based on observable inputs, management has determined that other real estate owned should be classified as Level 3.

Covered Other Real Estate Owned: Covered other real estate owned includes other real estate owned on which the majority of losses would be covered by loss-sharing agreements with the FDIC. Management initially valued these assets at fair value using mostly unobservable inputs and, as such, has classified these assets as Level 3.

Intangible Assets and Goodwill: Intangible assets consist of core deposit premiums acquired in connection with business combinations and are based on the established value of acquired customer deposits. The core deposit premium is initially recognized based on a valuation performed as of the consummation date and is amortized over an estimated useful life of three to ten years. Goodwill represents the excess of the purchase price over the fair value of the net identifiable assets acquired in a business combination. Goodwill and other intangible assets deemed to have an indefinite useful life are not amortized but instead are subject to an annual review for impairment.

FDIC Loss-Share Receivable: Because the FDIC will reimburse the Company for certain acquired loans should the Company experience a loss, an indemnification asset is recorded at fair value at the acquisition date. The indemnification asset is recognized at the same time as the indemnified loans, and measured on the same basis, subject to collectability or contractual limitations. The shared loss agreements on the acquisition date reflect the reimbursements expected to be received from the FDIC, using an appropriate discount rate, which reflects counterparty credit risk and other uncertainties. The shared loss agreements continue to be measured on the same basis as the related indemnified loans, and the loss-share receivable is impacted by changes in estimated cash flows associated with these loans.

Accrued Interest Receivable/Payable: The carrying amount of accrued interest receivable and accrued interest payable approximates fair value.

Cash Value of Bank Owned Life Insurance: The carrying value of cash value of bank owned life insurance approximates fair value.

Deposits: The carrying amount of demand deposits, savings deposits and variable-rate certificates of deposits approximates fair value. The fair value of fixed-rate certificates of deposits is estimated based on discounted contractual cash flows using interest rates currently being offered for certificates of similar maturities.

Securities Sold under Agreements to Repurchase and Other Borrowings: The carrying amount of variable rate borrowings and securities sold under repurchase agreements approximates fair value and are classified as Level 1. The fair value of fixed rate other borrowings is estimated based on discounted contractual cash flows using the current incremental borrowing rates for similar borrowing arrangements and are classified as Level 2.

Subordinated Deferrable Interest Debentures: The fair value of the Company's variable rate trust preferred securities is based primarily upon discounted cash flows using rates for securities with similar terms and remaining maturities and are classified as Level 2.

Off-Balance-Sheet Instruments: Because commitments to extend credit and standby letters of credit are typically made using variable rates and have short maturities, the carrying value and fair value are immaterial for disclosure.

Derivatives: The Company has entered into derivative financial instruments to manage interest rate risk. The valuation of these instruments is determined using widely accepted valuation techniques including discounted cash flow analysis on the expected cash flows of the derivatives. This analysis reflects the contractual terms of the derivative, including the period to maturity, and uses observable market-based inputs, including interest rate curves and implied volatilities. The fair value of the derivatives is determined using the market standard methodology of netting the discounted future fixed cash receipts and the discounted expected variable cash payments. The variable cash payments are based on an expectation of future interest rates (forward curves derived from observable market interest rate curves).

The Company incorporates credit valuation adjustments to appropriately reflect both its own nonperformance risk and the respective counterparty's nonperformance risk in the fair value measurements. In adjusting the fair value of its derivative contracts for the effect of nonperformance risk, the Company has considered the impact of netting any applicable credit enhancements such as collateral postings, thresholds, mutual puts and guarantees.

Although the Company has determined that the majority of the inputs used to value its derivative fall within Level 2 of the fair value hierarchy, the credit valuation adjustments associated with its derivatives utilize Level 3 inputs, such as estimates of current credit spreads to evaluate the likelihood of default by itself or the counterparty. However, as of December 31, 2015 and 2014, the Company has assessed the significance of the impact of the credit valuation adjustments on the overall valuation of its derivative positions and has determined that the credit valuation adjustment is not significant to the overall valuation of its derivatives. As a result, the Company has determined that its derivative valuation in its entirety is classified in Level 2 of the fair value hierarchy.

The following table presents the fair value measurements of assets and liabilities measured at fair value on a recurring basis and the level within the fair value hierarchy in which the fair value measurements fall as of December 31, 2015 and 2014:

	Fair Value Measurements on a Recurring Basis As of December 31, 2015			
	Fair Value	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
	(Dollars in Thousands)			
U.S. government sponsored agencies	\$ 14,890	\$ -	\$ 14,890	\$ -
State, county and municipal securities	161,316	-	161,316	-
Corporate debt securities	6,017	-	3,019	2,998
Mortgage-backed securities	600,962	-	600,962	-
Mortgage loans held for sale	111,182	-	111,182	-
Mortgage banking derivative instruments	2,687	-	2,687	-
Total recurring assets at fair value	<u>\$ 897,054</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 894,056</u>	<u>\$ 2,998</u>
Derivative financial instruments	\$ 1,439	\$ -	\$ 1,439	\$ -
Mortgage banking derivative instruments	137	-	137	-
Total recurring liabilities at fair value	<u>\$ 1,576</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 1,576</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

Fair Value Measurements on a Recurring Basis
As of December 31, 2014

Fair Value	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
(Dollars in Thousands)			
U.S. government sponsored agencies	\$ 14,678	\$ -	\$ 14,678
State, county and municipal securities	141,375	-	141,375
Corporate debt securities	11,040	-	8,540
Mortgage-backed securities	374,712	8,248	366,464
Mortgage loans held for sale	94,759	-	94,759
Mortgage banking derivative instruments	1,757	-	1,757
Total recurring assets at fair value	\$ 638,321	\$ 8,248	\$ 627,573
Derivative financial instruments	\$ 1,315	\$ -	\$ 1,315
Mortgage banking derivative instruments	249	-	249
Total recurring liabilities at fair value	\$ 1,564	\$ -	\$ 1,564

The following table presents the fair value measurements of assets measured at fair value on a non-recurring basis, as well as the general classification of such instruments pursuant to the valuation hierarchy as of December 31, 2015 and 2014:

Fair Value Measurements on a Nonrecurring Basis
As of December 31, 2015

Fair Value	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
(Dollars in Thousands)			
Impaired loans carried at fair value	\$ 27,069	\$ -	\$ 27,069
Other real estate owned	10,456	-	10,456
Purchased, non-covered other real estate owned	14,333	-	14,333
Covered other real estate owned	5,011	-	5,011
Total nonrecurring assets at fair value	\$ 56,869	\$ -	\$ 56,869

Fair Value Measurements on a Nonrecurring Basis
As of December 31, 2014

Fair Value	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
(Dollars in Thousands)			
Impaired loans carried at fair value	\$ 30,479	\$ -	\$ 30,479
Purchased, non-covered other real estate owned	15,585	-	15,585
Covered other real estate owned	19,907	-	19,907
Total nonrecurring assets at fair value	\$ 65,971	\$ -	\$ 65,971

The inputs used to determine estimated fair value of impaired loans and covered loans include market conditions, loan term, underlying collateral characteristics and discount rates. The inputs used to determine fair value of other real estate owned and covered other real estate owned include market conditions, estimated marketing period or holding period, underlying collateral characteristics and discount rates.

For the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014, there was not a change in the methods and significant assumptions used to estimate fair value.

The following table shows significant unobservable inputs used in the fair value measurement of Level 3 assets and liabilities.

	<u>Fair Value</u>	<u>Valuation Technique</u>	<u>Unobservable Inputs</u>	<u>Range of Discounts</u>	<u>Weighted Average Discount</u>
As of December 31, 2015					
Nonrecurring:					
Impaired loans	\$ 27,069	Third party appraisals and discounted cash flows	Collateral discounts and discount rates	0% - 100%	29%
Other Real Estate Owned	\$ 10,456	Third party appraisals, sales contracts, Broker price opinions	Collateral discounts and estimated costs to sell	10% - 90%	13%
Purchased non-covered real estate owned	\$ 14,333	Third party appraisals	Collateral discounts and estimated costs to sell	10% -69%	19%
Covered real estate owned	\$ 5,011	Third party appraisals	Collateral discounts and estimated costs to sell	0% - 74%	12%
Recurring:					
Investment securities available for sale	\$ 2,998	Discounted par values	Credit quality of underlying issuer	0%	0%
As of December 31, 2014					
Nonrecurring:					
Impaired loans	\$ 30,479	Third party appraisals and discounted cash flows	Collateral discounts and discount rates	0% - 50%	20%
Purchased non-covered real estate owned	\$ 15,585	Third party appraisals	Collateral discounts and estimated costs to sell	10% -96%	33%
Covered real estate owned	\$ 19,907	Third party appraisals	Collateral discounts and estimated costs to sell	10% - 90%	15%
Recurring:					
Investment securities available for sale	\$ 2,500	Discounted par values	Credit quality of underlying issuer	0%	0%

The carrying amount and estimated fair value of the Company's financial instruments, not shown elsewhere in these financial statements, were as follows:

	Carrying Amount	Fair Value Measurements at December 31, 2015 Using:			
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Total
(Dollars in Thousands)					
Financial assets:					
Cash and due from banks.....	\$ 118,518	\$ 118,518	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 118,518
Federal funds sold and interest-bearing accounts.....	272,045	272,045	-	-	272,045
Loans, net.....	3,971,974	-	-	3,982,606	3,982,606
FDIC loss-share receivable.....	6,301	-	-	(944)	(944)
Accrued interest receivable.....	21,274	21,274	-	-	21,274
Financial liabilities:					
Deposits	4,879,290	-	4,880,294	-	4,880,294
Securities sold under agreements to repurchase	63,585	63,585	-	-	36,585
Other borrowings	39,000	-	39,000	-	39,000
Accrued interest payable.....	1,054	1,054	-	-	1,054
Subordinated deferrable interest debentures	69,874	-	52,785	-	52,785
Fair Value Measurements at December 31, 2014 Using:					
	Carrying Amount	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Total
(Dollars in Thousands)					
Financial assets:					
Cash and due from banks.....	\$ 78,036	\$ 78,036	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 78,036
Federal funds sold and interest-bearing accounts.....	92,323	92,323	-	-	92,323
Loans, net.....	2,783,763	-	-	2,785,627	2,785,627
FDIC loss-share receivable.....	31,351	-	-	18,764	18,764
Accrued interest receivable.....	17,023	17,023	-	-	17,023
Financial liabilities:					
Deposits	3,431,149	-	3,432,059	-	3,432,059
Securities sold under agreements to repurchase	73,310	73,310	-	-	73,310
Other borrowings	78,881	-	78,881	-	78,881
Accrued interest payable.....	1,382	1,382	-	-	1,382
Subordinated deferrable interest debentures	65,325	-	46,564	-	46,564

NOTE 23 – ACCUMULATED OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Accumulated other comprehensive income for the Company consists of changes in net unrealized gains and losses on investment securities available for sale and interest rate swap derivatives. The reclassification for gains included in net income is recorded in net gains on sales of securities in the Consolidated Statements of Income. The following tables present a summary of the accumulated other comprehensive income balances, net of tax, as of December 31, 2015 and 2014.

(Dollars in Thousands)	Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Derivatives	Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Securities	Accumulated Other Comprehensive Income (Loss)
Balance, January 1, 2015	\$ 508	\$ 5,590	\$ 6,098
Reclassification for gains included in net income	-	(89)	(89)
Current year changes	(356)	(2,300)	(2,656)
Balance, December 31, 2015	<u>\$ 152</u>	<u>\$ 3,201</u>	<u>\$ 3,353</u>

(Dollars in Thousands)	Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Derivatives	Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Securities	Accumulated Other Comprehensive Income (Loss)
Balance, January 1, 2014	\$ 1,397	\$ (1,691)	\$ (294)
Reclassification for gains included in net income	-	(90)	(90)
Current year changes	(889)	7,371	6,482
Balance, December 31, 2014	<u>\$ 508</u>	<u>\$ 5,590</u>	<u>\$ 6,098</u>

NOTE 24 – SEGMENT REPORTING

The following table presents selected financial information with respect to the Company’s reportable business segments for the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013.

	Year Ended December 31, 2015				
	Banking Division	Retail Mortgage Division	Warehouse Lending Division	SBA Division	Total
	(Dollars in Thousands)				
Interest income	\$ 174,162	\$ 8,821	\$ 4,137	\$ 3,273	\$ 190,393
Interest expense	14,385	-	-	471	14,856
Net interest income	159,777	8,821	4,137	2,802	175,537
Provision for loan losses	4,847	417	-	-	5,264
Noninterest income	44,251	34,498	1,364	5,473	85,586
Noninterest expense					
Salaries and employee benefits	68,183	22,112	519	3,189	94,003
Equipment and occupancy expenses	19,320	1,674	7	194	21,195
Data processing and telecommunications expenses	18,681	1,065	95	8	19,849
Other expenses	59,636	3,787	123	522	64,068
Total noninterest expense	<u>165,820</u>	<u>28,638</u>	<u>744</u>	<u>3,913</u>	<u>199,115</u>
Income before income tax expense	33,361	14,264	4,757	4,362	56,744
Income tax expense	7,713	4,992	1,665	1,527	15,897
Net income	<u>25,648</u>	<u>9,272</u>	<u>3,092</u>	<u>2,835</u>	<u>40,847</u>
Less preferred stock dividends	-	-	-	-	-
Net income available to common shareholders	<u>\$ 25,648</u>	<u>\$ 9,272</u>	<u>\$ 3,092</u>	<u>\$ 2,835</u>	<u>\$ 40,847</u>
Total assets	\$ 5,166,045	\$ 246,730	\$ 101,893	\$ 74,272	\$ 5,588,940
Other intangible assets, net	\$ 17,058	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 17,058
Goodwill	\$ 90,082	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 90,082

**Year Ended
December 31, 2014**

	Banking Division	Retail Mortgage Division	Warehouse Lending Division	SBA Division	Total
	(Dollars in Thousands)				
Interest income	\$ 154,898	\$ 5,344	\$ 2,016	\$ 2,308	\$ 164,566
Interest expense	14,438	-	-	242	14,680
Net interest income	140,640	5,344	2,016	2,066	149,886
Provision for loan losses	4,822	826	-	-	5,648
Noninterest income	32,337	24,959	655	4,885	62,836
Noninterest expense					
Salaries and employee benefits	55,101	15,918	255	2,604	73,878
Equipment and occupancy expenses	16,097	1,342	1	81	17,521
Data processing and telecommunications expenses	14,436	1,043	54	18	15,551
Other expenses	39,175	3,603	392	749	43,919
Total noninterest expense	124,809	21,906	702	3,452	150,869
Income before income tax expense	43,166	7,571	1,969	3,499	56,205
Income tax expense	12,918	2,650	689	1,225	17,482
Net income	30,248	4,921	1,280	2,274	38,723
Less preferred stock dividends	286	-	-	-	286
Net income available to common shareholders	\$ 29,962	\$ 4,921	\$ 1,280	\$ 2,274	\$ 38,437
Total assets	\$ 3,751,503	\$ 164,588	\$ 58,502	\$ 62,484	\$ 4,037,077
Other intangible assets, net	\$ 8,221	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 8,221
Goodwill	\$ 63,547	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 63,547

**Year Ended
December 31, 2013**

	Banking Division	Retail Mortgage Division	Warehouse Lending Division	SBA Division	Total
	(Dollars in Thousands)				
Interest income	\$ 120,522	\$ 3,162	\$ 721	\$ 1,917	\$ 126,322
Interest expense	9,940	-	-	197	10,137
Net interest income	110,582	3,162	721	1,720	116,185
Provision for loan losses	11,486	-	-	-	11,486
Noninterest income	25,282	18,967	163	2,137	46,549
Noninterest expense					
Salaries and employee benefits	43,524	12,341	174	631	56,670
Equipment and occupancy expenses	11,599	625	6	56	12,286
Data processing and telecommunications expenses	10,957	534	39	9	11,539
Other expenses	36,850	4,258	128	214	41,450
Total noninterest expense	102,930	17,758	347	910	121,945
Income before income tax expense	21,448	4,371	537	2,947	29,303
Income tax expense	6,536	1,530	188	1,031	9,285
Net income	14,912	2,841	349	1,916	20,018
Less preferred stock dividends	1,738	-	-	-	1,738
Net income available to common shareholders	\$ 13,174	\$ 2,841	\$ 349	\$ 1,916	\$ 18,280
Total assets	\$ 3,506,954	\$ 108,198	\$ 14,229	\$ 38,268	\$ 3,667,649
Other intangible assets, net	\$ 6,009	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,009
Goodwill	\$ 35,049	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 35,049

NOTE 25 - QUARTERLY FINANCIAL DATA (unaudited)

The following table sets forth certain consolidated quarterly financial information of the Company. During the second quarter of 2015, the Company completed the acquisition of Merchants and completed the acquisition and data conversion of 18 additional branches in South Georgia and North Florida from Bank of America. The Company recorded approximately \$3.7 million of after-tax merger related charges from these acquisitions. Additionally, during the second quarter of 2015, the Company recorded \$7.3 million of after-tax OREO write-downs and other credit-related resolution expenses related to an aggressive write-down on remaining non-performing assets.

	Quarters Ended December 31, 2015			
	4	3	2	1
	(Dollars in Thousands, Except Per Share Data)			
Selected Income Statement Data:				
Interest income	\$ 52,601	\$ 51,195	\$ 44,229	\$ 42,368
Interest expense	3,983	3,796	3,541	3,536
Net interest income	48,618	47,399	40,688	38,832
Provision for loan losses	553	986	2,656	1,069
Net interest income after provision for loan losses	48,065	46,413	38,032	37,763
Noninterest income	22,407	24,978	20,626	17,575
Noninterest expense	51,221	47,950	51,152	40,812
Acquisition related expenses	1,807	446	5,712	15
Income before income taxes	17,444	22,995	1,794	14,511
Income tax	3,296	7,368	486	4,747
Net income	14,148	15,627	1,308	9,764
Preferred stock dividends	-	-	-	-
Net income available to common stockholders	<u>\$ 14,148</u>	<u>\$ 15,627</u>	<u>\$ 1,308</u>	<u>\$ 9,764</u>

Per Share Data:

Net income – basic	0.44	0.49	0.04	0.32
Net income – diluted	0.43	0.48	0.04	0.32
Common Dividends (Cash)	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
Common Dividends (Stock)	-	-	-	-

	Quarters Ended December 31, 2014			
	4	3	2	1
	(Dollars in Thousands, Except Per Share Data)			
Selected Income Statement Data:				
Interest income	\$ 44,900	\$ 43,186	\$ 38,607	\$ 37,873
Interest expense	3,894	4,054	3,343	3,389
Net interest income	41,006	39,132	35,264	34,484
Provision for loan losses	888	1,669	1,365	1,726
Net interest income after provision for loan losses	40,118	37,463	33,899	32,758
Noninterest income	16,362	17,901	15,819	12,754
Noninterest expense	41,666	38,028	34,446	32,789
Acquisition related expenses	67	551	2,872	450
Income before income taxes	14,747	16,785	12,400	12,273
Income tax	4,167	5,122	4,270	3,923
Net income	10,580	11,663	8,130	8,350
Preferred stock dividends	-	-	-	286
Net income available to common stockholders	<u>\$ 10,580</u>	<u>\$ 11,663</u>	<u>\$ 8,130</u>	<u>\$ 8,064</u>

Per Share Data:

Net income – basic	0.40	0.44	0.32	0.32
Net income – diluted	0.39	0.43	0.32	0.32
Common Dividends (Cash)	0.05	0.05	0.05	-
Common Dividends (Stock)	-	-	-	-

NOTE 26. CONDENSED FINANCIAL INFORMATION OF AMERIS BANCORP (PARENT COMPANY ONLY)**CONDENSED BALANCE SHEETS
DECEMBER 31, 2015 AND 2014
(Dollars in Thousands)**

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
Assets		
Cash and due from banks	\$ 5,847	\$ 868
Investment in subsidiaries	617,134	470,557
Other assets	<u>6,717</u>	<u>6,552</u>
Total assets	<u>\$ 629,698</u>	<u>\$ 477,977</u>
Liabilities		
Other liabilities	\$ 6,065	\$ 7,624
Other borrowings	39,000	39,000
Subordinated deferrable interest debentures	<u>69,874</u>	<u>65,325</u>
Total liabilities	114,939	111,949
Stockholders' equity	<u>514,759</u>	<u>366,028</u>
Total liabilities and stockholders' equity	<u>\$ 629,698</u>	<u>\$ 477,977</u>

CONDENSED STATEMENTS OF INCOME
YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015, 2014 AND 2013
(Dollars in Thousands)

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
Income			
Dividends from subsidiaries	\$10,000	\$29,000	\$ 2,200
Other income	59	235	26
Total income	<u>10,059</u>	<u>29,235</u>	<u>2,226</u>
Expense			
Interest	4,813	4,558	1,527
Other expense	1,521	2,253	1,133
Total expense	<u>6,334</u>	<u>6,811</u>	<u>2,660</u>
Earnings (loss) before income tax benefit and dividends received in excess of earnings of subsidiaries and equity in undistributed income (loss) of subsidiaries	3,725	22,424	(434)
Income tax benefit	<u>2,382</u>	<u>2,468</u>	<u>921</u>
Earnings (loss) before dividends received in excess of earnings of subsidiaries and equity in undistributed income of subsidiaries	6,107	24,892	487
Equity in undistributed income of subsidiaries	<u>34,740</u>	<u>13,831</u>	<u>19,531</u>
Net income	<u>40,847</u>	<u>38,723</u>	<u>20,018</u>
Preferred stock dividend	<u>-</u>	<u>286</u>	<u>1,738</u>
Net income available to common shareholders	<u>\$40,847</u>	<u>\$38,437</u>	<u>\$18,280</u>

CONDENSED STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS
YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015, 2014 AND 2013
(Dollars in Thousands)

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Net income	\$ 40,847	\$ 38,723	\$ 20,018
Adjustments to reconcile net income to net cash provided by (used in) operating activities:			
Stock-based compensation expense	1,485	2,058	1,041
Undistributed earnings of subsidiaries	(34,740)	(13,831)	(19,531)
(Increase) decrease in interest payable	20	(214)	(5,300)
Decrease in tax receivable	(2,656)	(256)	(813)
Provision for deferred taxes	188	(426)	39
Other operating activities	866	(1,558)	(2,686)
Total adjustments	<u>(34,837)</u>	<u>(14,227)</u>	<u>(27,250)</u>
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	<u>6,010</u>	<u>24,496</u>	<u>(7,232)</u>
INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Investment in subsidiary	(60,000)	-	-
Net cash proceeds received from (paid for) acquisitions	(49,940)	144	249
Net cash provided by investing activities	<u>(109,940)</u>	<u>144</u>	<u>249</u>
FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Issuance of common stock	114,889	-	-
Purchase of treasury shares	(732)	(474)	(116)
Dividends paid preferred stock	-	(286)	(1,400)
Dividends paid common stock	(6,439)	(4,016)	-
Proceeds from other borrowings	-	14,000	10,000
Repayment of other borrowings	-	(9,005)	-
Repurchase of preferred stock	-	(28,000)	-
Proceeds from exercise of stock options	1,191	459	410
Net cash provided by (used in) financing activities	<u>108,909</u>	<u>(27,322)</u>	<u>8,894</u>
Net change in cash and due from banks	4,979	(2,682)	1,911
Cash and due from banks at beginning of year	<u>868</u>	<u>3,550</u>	<u>1,639</u>
Cash and due from banks at end of year	<u>\$ 5,847</u>	<u>\$ 868</u>	<u>\$ 3,550</u>
SUPPLEMENTAL DISCLOSURE OF CASH FLOW INFORMATION			
Cash paid during the year for interest	\$ 4,793	\$ 4,772	\$ 1,523
Cash paid during the year for income taxes	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

REGISTRANT'S SUBSIDIARIES

Following is a list of the Registrant's subsidiaries and the state of incorporation or other jurisdiction.

<u>Name of Subsidiary</u>	<u>State of Incorporation or Other Jurisdiction</u>
Ameris Bank	State of Georgia
Ameris Statutory Trust I	State of Delaware
Ameris Sub Holding Company, Inc.	State of Delaware
Moultrie Real Estate Holdings, Inc.	State of Delaware
Quitman Real Estate Holdings, Inc.	State of Delaware
Thomas Real Estate Holdings, Inc.	State of Delaware
Citizens Real Estate Holdings, Inc.	State of Delaware
Cairo Real Estate Holdings, Inc.	State of Delaware
Southland Real Estate Holdings, Inc.	State of Alabama
Cordele Real Estate Holdings, Inc.	State of Delaware
First National Real Estate Holdings, Inc.	State of Delaware
M&F Real Estate Holdings, Inc.	State of Delaware
Tri-County Real Estate Holdings, Inc.	State of Delaware
First National Banc Statutory Trust I	State of Delaware
Prosperity Bank Statutory Trust II	State of Connecticut
Prosperity Bank Statutory Trust III	State of Delaware
Prosperity Bank Statutory Trust IV	State of Delaware
Prosperity Banking Capital Trust I	State of Delaware
Prosperity Land Holdings, LLC	State of Florida
Coastal Bankshares Statutory Trust I	State of Delaware
Coastal Bankshares Statutory Trust II	State of Connecticut
Merchants & Southern Statutory Trust I	State of Delaware
Merchants & Southern Statutory Trust II	State of Delaware

Each subsidiary conducts business under the name listed above.

CONSENT OF INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM

We consent to the incorporation by reference in Registration Statements on Form S-3 (No. 333-202277), Form S-4 (No. 333-208355) and Form S-8 (Nos. 333-131244, 333-197208 and 333-200597) of Ameris Bancorp of our report dated February 29, 2016, relating to the financial statements and effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting, appearing in this Annual Report on Form 10-K.

/s/ CROWE HORWATH LLP

Atlanta, Georgia
February 29, 2016

CONSENT OF INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM

We consent to the incorporation by reference in Registration Statements on Form S-3 (No. 333-202277), Form S-4 (No. 333-208355) and Form S-8 (Nos. 333-131244, 333-197208 and 333-200597) of Ameris Bancorp (the “Company”) of our report dated March 14, 2014, relating to our audit of the 2013 consolidated financial statements, which appears in this Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015.

/s/ PORTER KEADLE MOORE, LLC

Atlanta, Georgia
February 29, 2016

CERTIFICATION

I, Edwin W. Hortman, Jr., certify that:

1. I have reviewed this Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015, of Ameris Bancorp;
2. Based on my knowledge, this report does not contain any untrue statement of a material fact or omit to state a material fact necessary to make the statements made, in light of the circumstances under which such statements were made, not misleading with respect to the period covered by this report;
3. Based on my knowledge, the financial statements, and other financial information included in this report, fairly present in all material respects the financial condition, results of operations and cash flows of the registrant as of, and for, the periods presented in this report;
4. The registrant's other certifying officer(s) and I are responsible for establishing and maintaining disclosure controls and procedures (as defined in Exchange Act Rules 13a-15(e) and 15d-15(e)) and internal control over financial reporting (as defined in Exchange Act Rules 13a-15(f) and 15d-15(f)) for the registrant and have:
 - (a) Designed such disclosure controls and procedures, or caused such disclosure controls and procedures to be designed under our supervision, to ensure that material information relating to the registrant, including its consolidated subsidiaries, is made known to us by others within those entities, particularly during the period in which this report is being prepared;
 - (b) Designed such internal control over financial reporting, or caused such internal control over financial reporting to be designed under our supervision, to provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting and the preparation of financial statements for external purposes in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles;
 - (c) Evaluated the effectiveness of the registrant's disclosure controls and procedures and presented in this report our conclusions about the effectiveness of the disclosure controls and procedures, as of the end of the period covered by this report based on such evaluation; and
 - (d) Disclosed in this report any change in the registrant's internal control over financial reporting that occurred during the registrant's most recent fiscal quarter (the registrant's fourth fiscal quarter in the case of an annual report) that has materially affected, or is reasonably likely to materially affect, the registrant's internal control over financial reporting; and
5. The registrant's other certifying officer(s) and I have disclosed, based on our most recent evaluation of internal control over financial reporting, to the registrant's auditors and the audit committee of the registrant's board of directors (or persons performing the equivalent functions):
 - (a) All significant deficiencies and material weaknesses in the design or operation of internal control over financial reporting which are reasonably likely to adversely affect the registrant's ability to record, process, summarize and report financial information; and
 - (b) Any fraud, whether or not material, that involves management or other employees who have a significant role in the registrant's internal control over financial reporting.

Dated: February 29, 2016

/s/ Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.

Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.,
President and Chief Executive Officer
(principal executive officer)

CERTIFICATION

I, Dennis J. Zember Jr., certify that:

1. I have reviewed this Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015, of Ameris Bancorp;
2. Based on my knowledge, this report does not contain any untrue statement of a material fact or omit to state a material fact necessary to make the statements made, in light of the circumstances under which such statements were made, not misleading with respect to the period covered by this report;
3. Based on my knowledge, the financial statements, and other financial information included in this report, fairly present in all material respects the financial condition, results of operations and cash flows of the registrant as of, and for, the periods presented in this report;
4. The registrant's other certifying officer(s) and I are responsible for establishing and maintaining disclosure controls and procedures (as defined in Exchange Act Rules 13a-15(e) and 15d-15(e)) and internal control over financial reporting (as defined in Exchange Act Rules 13a-15(f) and 15d-15(f)) for the registrant and have:
 - (a) Designed such disclosure controls and procedures, or caused such disclosure controls and procedures to be designed under our supervision, to ensure that material information relating to the registrant, including its consolidated subsidiaries, is made known to us by others within those entities, particularly during the period in which this report is being prepared;
 - (b) Designed such internal control over financial reporting, or caused such internal control over financial reporting to be designed under our supervision, to provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting and the preparation of financial statements for external purposes in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles;
 - (c) Evaluated the effectiveness of the registrant's disclosure controls and procedures and presented in this report our conclusions about the effectiveness of the disclosure controls and procedures, as of the end of the period covered by this report based on such evaluation; and
 - (d) Disclosed in this report any change in the registrant's internal control over financial reporting that occurred during the registrant's most recent fiscal quarter (the registrant's fourth fiscal quarter in the case of an annual report) that has materially affected, or is reasonably likely to materially affect, the registrant's internal control over financial reporting; and
5. The registrant's other certifying officer(s) and I have disclosed, based on our most recent evaluation of internal control over financial reporting, to the registrant's auditors and the audit committee of the registrant's board of directors (or persons performing the equivalent functions):
 - (a) All significant deficiencies and material weaknesses in the design or operation of internal control over financial reporting which are reasonably likely to adversely affect the registrant's ability to record, process, summarize and report financial information; and
 - (b) Any fraud, whether or not material, that involves management or other employees who have a significant role in the registrant's internal control over financial reporting.

Dated: February 29, 2016

/s/ Dennis J. Zember Jr.

Dennis J. Zember Jr.,
Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer
(principal accounting and financial officer)

SECTION 1350 CERTIFICATION

I, Edwin W. Hortman, Jr., President and Chief Executive Officer of Ameris Bancorp (the “Company”), do hereby certify, in accordance with 18 U.S.C. § 1350, as adopted pursuant to Section 906 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, that, to my knowledge:

1. The Annual Report on Form 10-K of the Company for the year ended December 31, 2015 (the “Periodic Report”) fully complies with the requirements of Section 13(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended; and
2. The information contained in the Periodic Report fairly presents, in all material respects, the financial condition and results of operations of the Company.

Dated: February 29, 2016

/s/ Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.
Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.,
President and Chief Executive Officer
(principal executive officer)

SECTION 1350 CERTIFICATION

I, Dennis J. Zember Jr., Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Ameris Bancorp (the “Company”), do hereby certify, in accordance with 18 U.S.C. § 1350, as adopted pursuant to Section 906 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, that, to my knowledge:

1. The Annual Report on Form 10-K of the Company for the year ended December 31, 2015 (the “Periodic Report”) fully complies with the requirements of Section 13(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended; and
2. The information contained in the Periodic Report fairly presents, in all material respects, the financial condition and results of operations of the Company.

Dated: February 29 , 2016

/s/ Dennis J. Zember Jr.

Dennis J. Zember Jr.,
Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer
(principal accounting and financial officer)

Common Stock and Dividend Information

Ameris Bancorp Common Stock is listed on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the symbol "ABCB". The following table sets forth the low and high sales prices for the common stock as quoted on NASDAQ during 2015.

CALENDAR PERIOD	DIVIDENDS	SALES PRICE	
		Low	High
2015			
First Quarter	\$.05	\$22.75	\$26.55
Second Quarter	\$.05	\$24.73	\$26.87
Third Quarter	\$.05	\$24.97	\$28.75
Fourth Quarter	\$.05	\$27.65	\$34.90

SHAREHOLDER SERVICES

Computershare is Ameris Bancorp's stock transfer agent and administers all matters related to our stock. You may contact them via:

First Class, Registered or Certified Mail:

Computershare Investor Services
P.O. Box 30170
College Station, TX 77842-3170

Courier Service:

Computershare Investor Services
211 Quality Circle, Suite 210
College Station, TX 77845

Shareholder Services Number(s): (800) 568-3476
Investor Centre™ portal: www.computershare.com/investor
If your stock is held by a broker, please contact your broker.

AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

Upon written request, Ameris Bancorp will provide, without charge, a copy of the Annual Report on Form 10-K, including the financial statements and the financial statement schedules, required to be filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission for the fiscal year 2015.

Please direct requests to:

Ameris Bancorp
Attention: Angela Redd, Investor Relations
7915 Baymeadows Way, Suite 300
Jacksonville, Florida 32256

ANNUAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS

The 2015 Annual Meeting of Shareholders of Ameris Bancorp will be held at 9:30 AM (EDT), Tuesday, May 17, 2016, at the Company's offices located at 24 Second Avenue, Southeast, Moultrie, Georgia.



AMERIS BANK COMMUNITIES

ALABAMA

Abbeville
Birmingham
Dothan
Eufaula

FLORIDA

Blountstown
Crawfordville
Cross City
Defuniak Springs
Fleming Island
Gainesville
Hawthorne
High Springs
Jacksonville
Keystone Heights
Lake City
Live Oak
Lynn Haven
Melrose
Ocala
Orange Park
Ormond Beach
Palatka
Palm Coast
Panama City
Panama City Beach
St. Augustine
Tallahassee
Trenton

GEORGIA

Albany
Atlanta Midtown
Brunswick
Buena Vista
Butler
Cairo
Colquitt
Cordele
Doerun
Donalsonville
Douglas
Dublin
Duluth*
Ellaville
Fitzgerald
Hinesville
Jekyll Island
Lyons
Marietta*
Moultrie
Ocilla
Pooler
Quitman
Richmond Hill
Rincon
Savannah
St. Marys
St. Simons Island
Stockbridge*
Thomasville
Tifton
Valdosta
Vidalia
Waycross

SOUTH CAROLINA

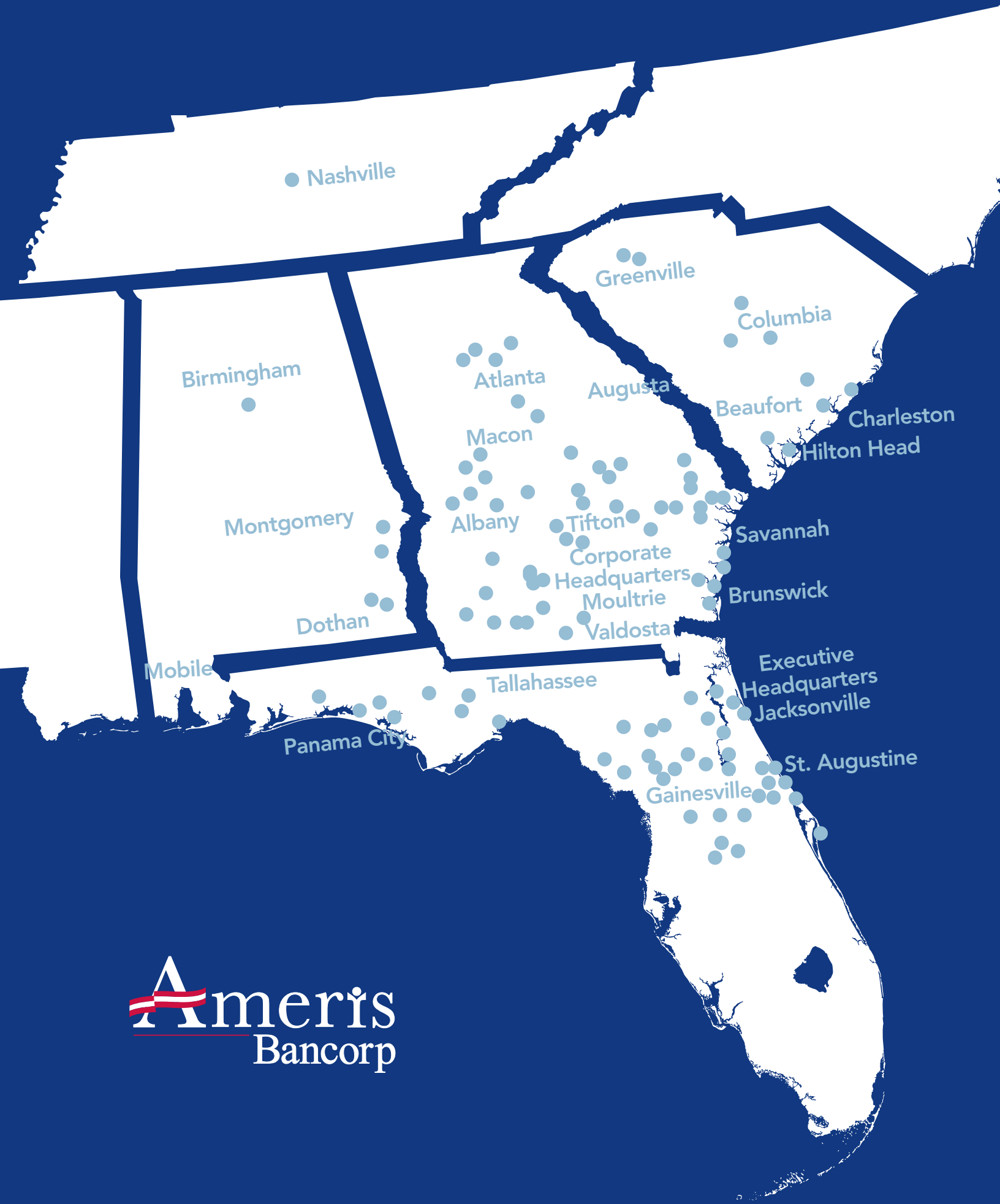
Beaufort
Charleston West Ashley
Columbia
Greenville
Hilton Head Island
Irmo
Lexington
Mt. Pleasant
Summerville

TENNESSEE

Franklin*

*Denotes communities with Mortgage only locations.

2015



Ameris
Bancorp



310 First Street, SE
PO Box 3668
Moultrie, GA 31776

(P) 229.890.1111 | (F) 229.890.2235

amerisbank.com



310 First Street, SE
PO Box 3668
Moultrie, GA 31776

(P) 229.890.1111 | (F) 229.890.2235

amerisbank.com

002CSN60BB Annual Report