



CREMX

Historically Smoothing Fixed-Income Volatility with Private Real Estate Debt

Download Now



Investors should carefully consider the investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses of the Redwood Private Real Estate Debt Fund. This and other important information about the Fund are contained in the prospectus, which can be obtained at redwoodmutualfunds.com or by calling 1-888-570-0805. The prospectus should be read carefully before investing.

The Redwood Private Real Estate Debt Fund is distributed by Distribution Services, LLC, member FINRA/SIPC. Redwood and Distribution Services, LLC, are not affiliated entities. Investing involves risk, including loss of principal.

Past performance is not indicative of future results.

20250812-4/17/221

Search

Go

Home » Financial Advisor » FA Online » Merit, EP Wealth And Mercer Riding Consolidation Wave To Higher Growth

« [Previous Article](#) | [Next Article](#) »

[Print](#) | [Reprint](#)

Merit, EP Wealth And Mercer Riding Consolidation Wave To Higher Growth

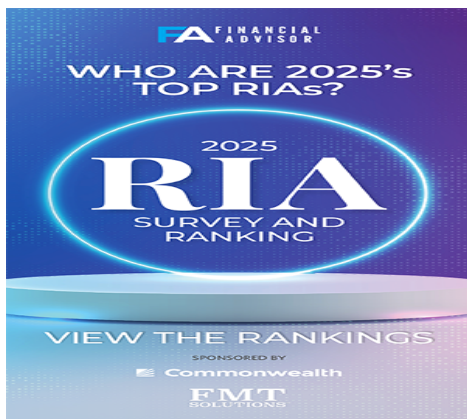
AUGUST 25, 2025 • [CHRISTOPHER C. WILLIAMS](#)

As a scorching summer of record RIA merger and acquisition activity slides swiftly into the cooler months of fall, recent billion-dollar deals by Mercer Advisors and EP Wealth Advisors signal the consolidation shaping the advisory landscape will remain a hot trend in the second half of 2025 and likely well beyond.

On July 1, Denver-based Mercer Global, with \$77 billion in assets, announced it bought RIA O'Brien Wealth Partners, managing \$1.1 billion; EP Wealth followed weeks later with its buy of Rappaport Reiches Capital Management, a Chicago-based firm with \$1.2 billion in managed assets. Last week, \$20 billion Merit Financial Advisors snapped up Global Wealth Advisors, a Texas hybrid RIA with \$860 million in assets.

"We're right there with them," Merit President Kay Lynn Mayhue told *Financial Advisor* about keeping pace with her acquisitive competitors. She added that Merit has two outstanding letters of intent for \$1 billion-plus firms she hopes to sign.

Indeed, in interviews with FA, top officials of Merit, Mercer and EP Wealth, three of the leading RIA strategic buyers, explained how they're riding the consolidation wave to supercharge growth and why they're on track to announce more deals this year than ever before.



The officials also say valuations remain attractive and they're having little trouble finding potential RIA firms looking to partner with larger, well-resourced platforms like theirs to scale or exit their businesses.

"We have nothing in our business plan to back off of the aggressive growth plans that we have," EP Wealth CEO Ryan Parker told Financial Advisor. "But it's not because we're trying to hit an artificial (AUM) number. It's because we know there are millions of people in this

country who need the type of services that we provide."

But beyond the obvious benefits to buyers and sellers, industry observers like Michael Mufson, managing partner of Mufson Howe Hunter & Co., an investment bank in Philadelphia, believe consolidation will also be to the industry's and clients' benefit.

"It's a good thing because it provides more products, more security and the consumer will get a better product at lower [prices] as these companies get bigger," Mufson said.

The potential challenge, he said, is for these big, fast-growing companies "to maintain intimacy with customers."

Dealmaking To Higher Growth.

In its second-quarter RIA deal report, Echelon, an investment bank and consulting firm in Los Angeles, "conservatively estimates" the number of M&A deals in the RIA space will reach 380 this year. That would easily outpace the prior record of 241 in 2022 and last year's 336. (Echelon tracks announced transactions involving an RIA with more than \$100 million in assets.)

For the first six months of the year ended June 30, strategic acquirers, mostly RIAs or broker dealers that buy to enter new markets or add product lines, led the dealmaking, topped by Merit with 11 deals totaling \$4.3 billion, according to Echelon. EP Wealth announced seven transactions, representing \$4.5 billion in assets, while Mercer reported six, garnering \$4.4 billion.

EP Wealth and Mercer have already exceeded their total transaction counts for both 2024 and 2023. Last year EP announced seven deals and Mercer nine, according to Echelon. Merit reported eight.

"This year, we are seeing increased interest in EP Wealth's value proposition and are expecting 10-plus new partnerships," Kyle Miller, EP Wealth's managing director of mergers and acquisitions, said in an email. "2025 will be a new record year for EP in terms of new M&A volume and new partnerships."

The \$36 billion EP Wealth is looking to add more capital firepower to support its growth plans. The RIA recently hired William Blair as lead investment banker and Houlihan Lokey as a co-advisor to find a secondary minority capital partner.

While EP has a "great capital partner in Berkshire Partners out of Boston," Parker told FA that management is "well into the process of mutual due diligence and in-depth discussions with potential partners."

Parker expects a decision in the fourth quarter.

"This is not a sale of our business or exit event," the CEO said in an email. "Our co-founders and executive team remain fully engaged, and management control stays firmly with us."

Historically Smoothing Fixed-Income Volatility with Private Real Estate Debt

[Download Now](#)

Investors should carefully consider the investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses of the Redwood Private Real Estate Debt Fund. This and other important information about the Fund are contained in the prospectus, which can be obtained at redwoodmutualfunds.com or by calling 1-888-570-0805. The prospectus should be read carefully before investing.

The Redwood Private Real Estate Debt Fund is distributed by Distribution Services, LLC, member FINRA/SIPC. Redwood and Distribution Services, LLC, are not affiliated entities. Investing involves risk, including loss of principal.

Past performance is not indicative of future results. 2025012-4717221

The #1 Tool for Dividend Investors

This revolutionary new app can track your payouts, alert you to raises, even forecast future income! Like having a personal AI that frees you up to take your portfolio to the next level.

[Click here for a short demo.](#)

Similar Articles

1. [Trump's Gamble With Fed Risks Pushing Key Bond Rates Even Higher](#)
2. [Former Advisor Ordered To Pay \\$2.3M For Cherry-Picking Client Trades, SEC Says](#)
3. [BofA, UBS Latest To Join Push For Small-Cap Outperformance](#)
4. [BofA, UBS Latest To Join Push For Small-Cap Outperformance](#)
5. [Crowdsourcing Hedge Fund Gets \\$500 Million JPMorgan Commitment](#)

Parker noted that the firm, founded in 1999, has tripled assets from \$11 billion in the four years since he became CEO in 2021. If management follows its business plan, EP is on track to "be a hundred-billion dollars plus firm in the next five years," he said.

Mercer Targeting 15 To 20 New Partners

In May Mercer closed its 100th acquisition, the first independent RIA to do so.

On August 1, Mercer announced the acquisition of Family Wealth Planning Group and its affiliate, Family Wealth Tax Advisory, a Naples, Fla.-based wealth and tax planning firm overseeing \$1.2 billion in assets. It was the third acquisition of a \$1 billion-plus RIA in three months for the Denver-based RIA.

Martine Lellis, principal of M&A partner development at Mercer, expressed confidence that her firm can sustain that hot pace of adding and partnering with firms, including billion-dollar-plus practices.

"I believe we can, and we have a plan to do so," Lellis said.

Mercer is looking to bring more than "15 to 20 partner firms on board this year at a size and scale that'll be of great benefit," Lellis said.

Merit's acquisition last week of Global Wealth was the RIA's 41st acquisition in four and a half years. The firm could announce 14 deals this year, according to Mayhue.

"Not because we set a goal to do 14 deals but because we found 14 great businesses," she said. "We're serial acquirers of talent and leadership, not of numbers and books of business."

Mayhue is especially keen on finding talent in places such as Colorado and Chicago, which is packed with "great, great potential."

She said the "next stop" or growth phase for Merit is to hit the \$50 billion mark in three to five years. "Absolutely we can," she said. "But the decisions that we are making today are on the hundred-billion-dollar company that Merit is going to be in the future."

Why Organic Growth Matters

As acquiring RIAs look for talent, sellers are attracted to buyers that are growing organically, according to Mayhue.

"If you're looking to partner with those growth-minded, great entrepreneurs, great leaders, they're not going to go past the first conversation unless you have a really great story around organic growth," she said.

Merit is "running around 10% net organic growth" but wants to grow into the high teens, she said.

EP Wealth's "aggressive growth" comes with a healthy dose of organic growth, according to Miller. "Our goal is to maintain double-digit organic growth excluding market impact," he said.

Mercer is recording organic growth in the "high-single digits," according to Lellis.

Significantly, recent deals by Mercer and EP Wealth involved women-led or women-majority partners. Company officials at the three firms said women initiatives are key pillars of their recruitment strategies.

Of the 105 firms Mercer has acquired or partnered with since 2012, 20 have been wholly or partially owned by women, Lellis said.

"We want to have a base of professionals that reflects the population we are delivering our services to and clients we are looking to support," said Lellis, noting women's growing control and management of, for example, family finances. "We have been incredibly conscientious about strategically ... building that into our

organization as part of our DNA. I think that makes such attractive to women-led firms."

Valuations Remain Strong

While some fear private equity is driving up prices, the three RIAs maintained deal valuations remain attractive.

Mufson Howe reported in its second-quarter report that firms with enterprise value of between \$500 million in assets and \$1 billion sold for 9.9 times EBITDA over the last 12 months.

"We still find the space attractive," Lellis said. "We wouldn't be consummating these transactions if we didn't."

Furthermore, no one sees the surging wave of consolidation cresting anytime soon.

"If you think about the momentum in our pipeline, there's more interest today than there was six months ago and I would argue there was more interest six months ago than there was 12 months ago," EP Wealth's Miller said. "It's safe to think that we're in the early innings of this consolidation cycle."

[« Previous Article](#) | [Next Article »](#)

0 Comments

[Login in order to post a comment](#)



FINANCIAL
ADVISOR

SUBSCRIBE

- HOME

LOGIN

ABOUT US
- MEDIA KIT

SUBSCRIPTIONS

LICENSING & REPRINTS
- CONTACT US

SITEMAP