

BGC Partners, Inc.
Form 424B3
June 12, 2012
Table of Contents

**Filed Pursuant to Rule 424(b)(3)
Registration No. 333-180331**

Prospectus

BGC PARTNERS, INC.

\$300,000,000

Debt Securities

Class A Common Stock Issuable Upon Conversion or Exchange of Debt Securities

We are offering up to \$300,000,000 aggregate principal amount of our debt securities. The debt securities may be offered in one or more series, in amounts, at prices and on terms to be determined at the time of the offering. The debt securities may be convertible into or exchangeable for shares of our Class A common stock.

We will provide the specific terms of the debt securities in supplements to this prospectus. You should read this prospectus and the applicable prospectus supplement carefully before you invest.

Our Class A common stock is traded on the Nasdaq Global Select Market under the symbol BGCP. On June 11, 2012, the last reported sales price of our Class A common stock was \$6.09 per share.

An investment in our debt securities and Class A common stock involves risks. See the Risk Factors section on page 5 of this prospectus and in our latest Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, which we refer to as the SEC, and any updates to those risk factors or new risk factors contained in our subsequent Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and Current Reports on Form 8-K filed with the SEC, all of which we incorporate by reference herein.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or determined if this prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is June 12, 2012.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<u>About This Prospectus</u>	ii
<u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	iii
<u>Certain Defined Terms</u>	v
<u>Summary</u>	1
<u>Risk Factors</u>	5
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	6
<u>Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges</u>	7
<u>Description of the Debt Securities</u>	8
<u>Description of Capital Stock</u>	21
<u>Dividend Policy</u>	26
<u>Price Range of Class A Common Stock</u>	29
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	30
<u>Conflicts of Interest</u>	30
<u>Legal Matters</u>	30
<u>Experts</u>	30
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	32
<u>Documents Incorporated by Reference</u>	32

You should rely only on the information provided in this prospectus, in any prospectus supplement that we provide to you in connection with an offering of the securities described in this prospectus or in any document incorporated by reference into this prospectus or any applicable prospectus supplement. We have not authorized anyone to provide you with different information. No offer of the securities described in this prospectus is being made in any jurisdiction where the offer is not permitted. You should not assume that the information in this prospectus, or in any prospectus supplement that we provide to you in connection with an offering of the securities described in this prospectus, or in any document incorporated by reference into this prospectus or any applicable prospectus supplement is accurate as of any date other than the date of the applicable document. Since the respective dates of this prospectus, any prospectus supplement that we provide to you in connection with an offering of the securities described in this prospectus, or any documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus or any applicable prospectus supplement, our businesses, financial condition, results of operations, cash flows and prospects might have changed.

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is part of a registration statement that we filed with the SEC using a shelf registration process. Under the shelf registration process, we may offer and sell our debt securities and any Class A common stock that may be issuable upon conversion or exchange of such debt securities as described in this prospectus in one or more offerings. Each time we sell a series of debt securities, we will provide a prospectus supplement containing a description of the debt securities we will offer and specific information about the terms of that series of debt securities and the related offering. Any such prospectus supplement may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus. If there is any inconsistency between the information in this prospectus and the applicable prospectus supplement, you should rely on the information in such prospectus supplement.

Table of Contents

FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus contain forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, which we refer to as the Securities Act, and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, which we refer to as the Exchange Act. Such statements are based upon current expectations that involve risks and uncertainties. Any statements contained herein or in documents incorporated by reference that are not statements of historical fact may be deemed to be forward-looking statements. For example, words such as may, will, should, estimates, predicts, potential, continue, strategies, believes, anticipates, plans, expects, intends and similar expressions are intended to identify forward-looking statements.

Our actual results and the outcome and timing of certain events may differ significantly from the expectations discussed in the forward-looking statements. Factors that might cause or contribute to such a discrepancy include, but are not limited to:

pricing and commissions and market position with respect to any of our products and services and those of our competitors;

the effect of industry concentration and reorganization, reduction of customers and consolidation;

liquidity, regulatory and clearing capital requirements and the impact of credit market events;

market conditions, including trading volume and volatility, potential deterioration of the equity and debt capital markets, and our ability to access the capital markets;

our relationships with Cantor Fitzgerald, L.P., which we refer to as Cantor, and its affiliates, including Cantor Fitzgerald & Co., which we refer to as CF&Co, any related conflicts of interest, competition for and retention of brokers and other managers and key employees, support for liquidity and capital and other relationships, including Cantor's holding of our 8.75% convertible notes, CF&Co's acting as our sales agent under our controlled equity or other offerings, and CF&Co's acting as our financial advisor in connection with one or more business combinations or other transactions;

economic or geopolitical conditions or uncertainties;

extensive regulation of our businesses, changes in regulations relating to the financial services and other industries, and risks relating to compliance matters, including regulatory examinations, inspections, investigations and enforcement actions, and any resulting costs, fines, penalties, sanctions, enhanced oversight, increased financial and capital requirements, and changes to or restrictions or limitations on specific activities, operations, compensatory arrangements, and growth opportunities, including acquisitions, hiring, and new business, products, or services;

factors related to specific transactions or series of transactions, including credit, performance and unmatched principal risk, counterparty failure, and the impact of fraud and unauthorized trading;

costs and expenses of developing, maintaining and protecting our intellectual property, as well as employment and other litigation and their related costs, including judgments or settlements paid or received;

Edgar Filing: BGC Partners, Inc. - Form 424B3

certain financial risks, including the possibility of future losses and negative cash flows from operations, an increased need for short-term borrowings, potential liquidity and other risks relating to our ability to obtain financing or refinancing of existing debt on terms acceptable to us, if at all, and risks of the resulting leverage, including potentially causing a reduction in our credit ratings and/or the associated outlooks given by the rating agencies to those credit ratings, increased borrowing costs, as well as interest and currency rate fluctuations;

our ability to enter new markets or develop new products, trading desks, marketplaces or services and to induce customers to use these products, trading desks, marketplaces or services and to secure and maintain market share;

iii

Table of Contents

our ability to enter into marketing and strategic alliances and business combination or other transactions in the financial services, real estate and other industries, including acquisitions, dispositions, reorganizations, partnering opportunities and joint ventures and to meet our financial reporting obligations with respect thereto, and the integration of any completed transactions;

our ability to hire and retain personnel;

our ability to expand the use of technology for hybrid and fully electronic trading;

our ability to effectively manage any growth that may be achieved, while ensuring compliance with all applicable regulatory requirements;

our ability to identify and remediate any material weaknesses in our internal controls that could affect our ability to prepare financial statements and reports in a timely manner, control our policies, procedures, operations and assets, assess and manage our operational, regulatory and financial risks, and integrate our acquired businesses;

the effectiveness of our risk management policies and procedures, and the impact of unexpected market moves and similar events;

the fact that the prices at which shares of our Class A common stock are sold in one or more of our controlled equity offerings or in other offerings or other transactions may vary significantly, and purchasers of shares in such offerings or transactions, as well as existing stockholders, may suffer significant dilution if the price they paid for their shares is higher than the price paid by other purchasers in such offerings or transactions;

our ability to meet expectations with respect to payments of dividends and distributions and repurchases of shares of our Class A common stock and purchases of limited partnership interests of BGC Holdings, L.P., which we refer to as BGC Holdings, or other equity interests of our subsidiaries, including from Cantor, our executive officers, other employees, partners, and others, and the net proceeds to be realized by us from offerings of our shares of Class A common stock;

the effect on the market for and trading price of our Class A common stock of various offerings and other transactions, including our controlled equity and other offerings of our Class A common stock and convertible or exchangeable debt securities, our repurchases of shares of our Class A common stock and purchases of BGC Holdings limited partnership interests or other equity interests of our subsidiaries, our payment of dividends on our Class A common stock and distributions on BGC Holdings limited partnership interests, convertible arbitrage, hedging, and other transactions engaged in by holders of our 4.50% convertible notes and counterparties to our capped call transactions, and resales of shares of our Class A common stock acquired from us or Cantor, including pursuant to our employee benefit plans, conversion of our convertible notes, conversion or exchange of our convertible or exchangeable debt securities, and distributions from Cantor pursuant to Cantor's distribution rights obligations and other distributions to Cantor partners, including deferred distribution rights shares; and

the risk factors described in our latest Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC and any updates to those risk factors or new risk factors contained in our subsequent Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and Current Reports on Form 8-K filed with the SEC, all of which we incorporate by reference herein.

The foregoing risks and uncertainties, as well as those risks and uncertainties referred to under the heading "Risk Factors" and those incorporated by reference into this prospectus, may cause actual results to differ materially from the forward-looking statements. The information included or incorporated by reference into this prospectus is given as of the respective dates of this prospectus or the documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus, and future events or circumstances could differ significantly from such information. We do not undertake to publicly update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.

Table of Contents

CERTAIN DEFINED TERMS

Unless we otherwise indicate or unless the context requires otherwise, any reference in this prospectus to:

4.50% convertible notes refers to the BGC Partners 4.50% convertible senior notes due 2016, which are convertible into shares of Class A common stock;

8.75% convertible notes refers to the BGC Partners 8.75% convertible senior notes due 2015, which are convertible into shares of Class A common stock;

April 2008 distribution rights shares refers to shares of Class A common stock distributed, or to be distributed on a deferred basis, by Cantor to certain current and former partners of Cantor pursuant to distribution rights provided to such partners on April 1, 2008;

BGC Global refers to BGC Global Holdings, L.P., which holds the non-U.S. businesses of BGC Partners;

BGC Holdings refers to BGC Holdings, L.P.;

BGC Partners refers to BGC Partners, Inc. and its consolidated subsidiaries;

BGC Partners OldCo refers to BGC Partners, LLC (formerly known as BGC Partners, Inc.) before the merger;

BGC U.S. refers to BGC Partners, L.P., which holds the U.S. businesses of BGC Partners;

Cantor or the Cantor group refers to Cantor Fitzgerald, L.P. and its subsidiaries other than BGC Partners;

Cantor units refers to exchangeable limited partnership interests of BGC Holdings held by Cantor entities;

CF&Co refers to Cantor Fitzgerald & Co.;

CFGM refers to CF Group Management, Inc., the managing general partner of Cantor;

Class A common stock refers to BGC Partners Class A common stock, par value \$0.01 per share;

Class B common stock refers to BGC Partners Class B common stock, par value \$0.01 per share;

Edgar Filing: BGC Partners, Inc. - Form 424B3

common stock refers to Class A common stock and Class B common stock, collectively;

convertible notes refers to the 4.50% convertible notes and the 8.75% convertible notes, collectively;

debt securities refers to the debt securities of BGC Partners included in this prospectus;

deferred distribution rights shares refers to distribution rights shares to be distributed by Cantor on a deferred basis;

distribution rights refers to the obligation of Cantor to distribute to certain current and former partners of Cantor shares of Class A common stock;

distribution rights shares refers to the April 2008 distribution rights shares and the February 2012 distribution rights shares, collectively;

eSpeed refers to eSpeed, Inc.;

February 2012 distribution rights shares refers to shares of Class A common stock to be distributed on a deferred basis to certain partners of Cantor in payment of previous quarterly partnership distributions pursuant to distribution rights provided to such partners on February 14, 2012;

February 2012 sales agreement refers to the controlled equity offering sales agreement, dated February 15, 2012, between BGC Partners and CF&Co;

founding partners refers to the individuals who became limited partners of BGC Holdings in the mandatory redemption of interests in Cantor in connection with the separation and merger and who provide services to BGC Partners (provided that members of the Cantor group and Howard W. Lutnick

Table of Contents

(including any entity directly or indirectly controlled by Mr. Lutnick or any trust with respect to which he is a grantor, trustee or beneficiary) are not founding partners);

founding/working partners refers to founding partners and/or working partners of BGC Holdings;

founding/working partner units refers to partnership units of BGC Holdings held by founding/working partners;

GAAP refers to accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America;

limited partners refers to holders of limited partnership units;

limited partnership interests refers to founding/working partner units, limited partnership units and Cantor units, collectively;

limited partnership units refers to REUs, RPU, PSUs and PSIs, collectively;

merger refers to the merger of BGC Partners OldCo with and into eSpeed on April 1, 2008 pursuant to the Agreement and Plan of Merger, dated as of May 29, 2007, as amended as of November 5, 2007 and February 1, 2008, by and among eSpeed, BGC Partners OldCo, Cantor, BGC U.S., BGC Global and BGC Holdings;

OpCos refers to BGC U.S. and BGC Global, collectively;

PSIs refers to certain working partner units of BGC Holdings held by certain employees of BGC Partners and other persons who provide services to BGC Partners;

PSUs refers to certain working partner units of BGC Holdings held by certain employees of BGC Partners and other persons who provide services to BGC Partners;

REUs refers to certain limited partnership units of BGC Holdings held by certain employees of BGC Partners and other persons;

RPU refers to certain limited partnership units of BGC Holdings held by certain employees of BGC Partners and other persons;

RSUs refers to BGC Partners unvested restricted stock units held by certain employees of BGC Partners and other persons who provide services to BGC Partners;

separation refers to the transfer by Cantor of certain assets and liabilities to BGC Partners OldCo and/or its subsidiaries pursuant to the Separation Agreement, dated as of March 31, 2008, by and among Cantor, BGC Partners OldCo, BGC U.S., BGC Global and BGC Holdings;

Edgar Filing: BGC Partners, Inc. - Form 424B3

September 2011 sales agreement refers to the controlled equity offering sales agreement, dated September 9, 2011, between BGC Partners and CF&Co;

short-term borrowings refers to borrowings under our revolving credit agreement, dated June 23, 2011, which provides for up to \$130.0 million of unsecured revolving credit through June 23, 2013;

working partners refers holders of working partner units; and

working partner units refers to partnership units of BGC Holdings held by working partners.

Table of Contents

SUMMARY

*This summary highlights selected information from this prospectus, but may not contain all information that may be important to you. The following summary is qualified in its entirety by the more detailed information included in or incorporated by reference into this prospectus. For a more complete understanding of the terms of our debt securities and our Class A common stock that may be issuable upon conversion or exchange of such debt securities, and before making your investment decision, you should carefully read this entire prospectus, the prospectus supplement provided in connection with an offering of the debt securities and the documents referred to in *Where You Can Find More Information and Document Incorporated by Reference*. See the *Certain Defined Terms* section beginning on page v of this prospectus for the definition of certain terms used in this prospectus.*

When we use the words *BGC Partners, we, us, our or the Company*, we are referring to *BGC Partners, Inc. and its consolidated subsidiaries*.

The Company

We are a leading global brokerage company primarily servicing the wholesale financial and property markets, specializing in the brokering of a broad range of products, including fixed income securities, interest rate swaps, foreign exchange, equities, equity derivatives, credit derivatives, commercial real estate, commodities, futures, and structured products. We also provide a full range of services, including trade execution, broker-dealer services, clearing, processing, information, and other back-office services to a broad range of financial and non-financial institutions. Our integrated platform is designed to provide flexibility to customers with regard to price discovery, execution and processing of transactions, and enables them to use voice, hybrid, or, in many markets, fully electronic brokerage services in connection with transactions executed either over-the-counter or through an exchange. Through our eSpeed, BGC Trader™, and BGC Market Data brands, we offer financial technology solutions, market data, and analytics related to select financial instruments and markets.

In the second quarter of 2012, we completed the acquisition of substantially all of the assets of Grubb & Ellis Company and its direct and indirect subsidiaries (Grubb & Ellis) and have been integrating the Grubb & Ellis assets with our Newmark Knight Frank brand. The resulting brand, Newmark Grubb Knight Frank, is a full-service commercial real estate platform. Through this Newmark Grubb Knight Frank brand, we offer a wide range of services, including leasing and corporate advisory, investment sales and financial services, consulting, project and development management, and property and facilities management.

Our customers include many of the world's largest banks, broker-dealers, investment banks, trading firms, hedge funds, governments, corporations, property owners, real estate developers and investment firms.

We have offices in dozens of major markets, including New York and London, as well as in Atlanta, Beijing, Boston, Chicago, Copenhagen, Dubai, Hong Kong, Houston, Istanbul, Johannesburg, Los Angeles, Mexico City, Miami, Moscow, Nyon, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Seoul, Singapore, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, Washington, D.C. and Zurich. We expect to have additional offices as we integrate the Grubb & Ellis business. As of March 31, 2012, we had 2,170 brokers and salespeople across more than 220 desks.

Our Organizational Structure

We are a holding company, and our businesses are operated through two operating partnerships, which we refer to as the OpCos : BGC U.S., which holds our U.S. businesses, and BGC Global, which holds our non-U.S. businesses.

The limited partnership interests of the OpCos are held by us and BGC Holdings, and the limited partnership interests of BGC Holdings are currently held by the founding/working partners, holders of limited

Table of Contents

partnership units and Cantor. We hold the BGC Holdings general partnership interest and the BGC Holdings special voting limited partnership interest, which entitle us to remove and appoint the general partner of BGC Holdings, and serve as the general partner of BGC Holdings, which entitles us to control BGC Holdings. BGC Holdings, in turn, holds the BGC U.S. general partnership interest and the BGC U.S. special voting limited partnership interest, which entitle the holder thereof to remove and appoint the general partner of BGC U.S., and the BGC Global general partnership interest and the BGC Global special voting limited partnership interest, which entitle the holder thereof to remove and appoint the general partner of BGC Global, and serves as the general partner of BGC U.S. and BGC Global, all of which entitle BGC Holdings (and thereby us) to control each of BGC U.S. and BGC Global. BGC Holdings holds its BGC Global general partnership interest through a company incorporated in the Cayman Islands, BGC Global Holdings GP Limited.

Table of Contents

The following diagram illustrates our ownership structure as of May 31, 2012. The following diagram does not reflect the various subsidiaries of us, BGC U.S., BGC Global, BGC Holdings or Cantor, or the noncontrolling interests in our consolidated subsidiaries, other than Cantor's units in BGC Holdings.

Table of Contents

* Shares of our Class B common stock are convertible into shares of our Class A common stock at any time in the discretion of the holder on a one-for-one basis. Accordingly, if Cantor converted all of its Class B common stock into Class A common stock, Cantor would hold 28.2% of the voting power, and the public stockholders would hold 71.8% of the voting power (and the indirect economic interests in BGC U.S. and BGC Global would remain unchanged). The diagram reflects (i) 1,010,655 shares of Class A common stock that Cantor distributed to its partners on February 14, 2012 and 282,023 shares of Class A common stock that Cantor distributed to its partners on March 21, 2012 (but not the 1,928,103 February 2012 distribution rights shares that remain to be distributed by Cantor); (ii) an aggregate of 721,679 April 2008 distribution rights shares that Cantor has distributed since September 2011, including the 498,960 shares of Class A common stock that Cantor distributed on February 14, 2012 (but not the 15,545,606 April 2008 distribution rights shares that remain to be distributed by Cantor); (iii) 75,000 shares of Class A common stock that Cantor donated to The Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund on March 9, 2012 and that may be included in the prospectus under our separate resale Registration Statement on Form S-3 (Registration No. 333-175034); (iv) an aggregate of 1,050,000 shares of Class A common stock that we donated to The Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund on February 3, 2012 and March 9, 2012, all of which shares may in the future be offered and sold under our separate shelf Registration Statement on Form S-3 (Registration No. 333-180391); (v) an aggregate of 5,150,000 shares of Class A common stock that we have sold under the September 2011 sales agreement since January 1, 2012 (but not the 140,090 shares that remain to be sold under that sales agreement), pursuant to our shelf Registration Statement on Form S-3 (Registration No. 333-176523); (vi) an aggregate of 886,569 Cantor units that Cantor purchased from BGC Holdings on March 13, 2012 in connection with the redemption and/or grant of exchangeability of founding/working partner units; (vii) an aggregate of 34,160 Cantor units that Cantor purchased from BGC Holdings on May 4, 2012 in connection with the redemption of non-exchangeable founding/working partner units; (viii) an aggregate of 44,013 shares of Class A common stock that we repurchased, including an aggregate of 41,523 shares from Mr. Merkel and certain family trusts, on March 13, 2012; and (ix) 895,141 exchangeable founding/working partner units that we repurchased from a founding/working partner on April 5, 2012. The diagram does not reflect Cantor's economic interest in the 8.75% convertible notes or the 22,959,124 shares of Class A common stock acquirable by Cantor upon conversion thereof. If Cantor converted all of the 8.75% convertible notes into shares of Class A common stock, Cantor would hold 78.9% of the voting power, and the public stockholders would hold 21.1% of the voting power (and Cantor's indirect economic interests in each of BGC U.S. and BGC Global would be 38.8%). Further, the diagram does not reflect (i) 10,000,000 shares of Class A common stock that may be sold under the February 2012 sales agreement, pursuant to our shelf Registration Statement on Form S-3 (Registration No. 333-176523); (ii) 9,961,596 shares of Class A common stock that remain available to be sold pursuant to the BGC Partners, Inc. Dividend Reinvestment and Stock Purchase Plan under our shelf Registration Statement on Form S-3 (Registration No. 333-173109); (iii) 19,208,090 shares of Class A common stock that may be sold under our acquisition shelf Registration Statement on Form S-4 (Registration No. 333-169232); (iv) 16,260,160 shares of Class A common stock that may be issued upon conversion of the 4.50% convertible notes; or (v) any shares of Class A common stock that may become issuable upon the conversion or exchange of any convertible or exchangeable debt securities that may in the future be sold under our shelf Registration Statement on Form S-3 (Registration No. 333-180331). For purposes of the diagram and this paragraph, Cantor's percentage ownership also includes CFGM's percentage ownership.

Executive Offices

Our executive offices are located at 499 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10022, while our international headquarters are located at 1 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London E14 5RD, United Kingdom. Our telephone number is (212) 610-2200. Our website is located at www.bgcpartners.com, and our e-mail address is info@bgcpartners.com. The information contained on, or that may be accessed through, our website is not part of, and is not incorporated into, this prospectus.

Table of Contents

RISK FACTORS

An investment in our debt securities and any shares of our Class A common stock that may be issuable upon conversion or exchange of the debt securities involves risks. You should consider carefully the Risk Factors section of our latest Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC, and any updates to those risk factors or new risk factors contained in our subsequent Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and Current Reports on Form 8-K filed with the SEC, all of which we incorporate by reference herein, and in the prospectus supplement that we will provide to you in connection with an offering of securities described in this prospectus, as well as the other information included in this prospectus and in any applicable prospectus supplement before making an investment decision. Any of the risk factors could significantly and negatively affect our businesses, financial condition, results of operations, cash flows, and prospects and the value and trading prices of the debt securities and Class A common stock. You could lose all or part of your investment in our debt securities and Class A common stock.

Table of Contents

USE OF PROCEEDS

Unless otherwise set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement, we intend to use the net proceeds from the sale of the debt securities included in this prospectus for general corporate purposes, which may include, among other things:

additions to working capital;

the repurchase, purchase or redemption of our outstanding equity and debt securities, BGC Holdings limited partnership interests or other equity interests in our subsidiaries, including from Cantor, our executive officers, other employees, partners and others;

the repayment of our indebtedness, including our short-term borrowings; and

the expansions of our business through internal growth or acquisitions.

Table of Contents**RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES**

The following table presents the ratios of earnings to fixed charges for us and our consolidated subsidiaries for the periods indicated. For the purposes of calculating the ratio of earnings to fixed charges, earnings consist of income before income taxes and fixed charges, net. Fixed charges consist of interest expense incurred on all indebtedness, amortized premiums, discounts and capitalized expenses relating to indebtedness and interest within rental expense. Neither we nor any of our consolidated subsidiaries had any preferred shares outstanding for any of the periods reflected in this table.

	Quarter Ended		Year Ended December 31,			
	March 31, 2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
(dollars in thousands)						
Earnings:						
Income before income taxes(1)	\$ 21,368	\$ 60,964	\$ 63,855	\$ 73,175	\$ 16,843	\$ 43,389
Add: Fixed charges, net	7,958	25,606	15,409	10,363	18,950	26,251
Income before income taxes and fixed charges, net	\$ 29,326	\$ 86,570	\$ 79,264	\$ 83,538	\$ 35,793	\$ 69,640
Fixed charges:						
Total interest expense(2)	\$ 6,476	\$ 22,798	\$ 14,080	\$ 9,920	\$ 18,950	\$ 26,251
Amortized premiums, discounts and capitalized expenses related to indebtedness	1,082	1,808	129	43		
Interest within rental expense	400	1,000	1,200	400		
Total fixed charges	\$ 7,958	\$ 25,606	\$ 15,409	\$ 10,363	\$ 18,950	\$ 26,251
Ratio of earnings to fixed charges	3.7	3.4	5.1	8.1	1.9	2.7

(1) Income before income taxes does not include income or loss from equity investees.

(2) Includes interest expense of \$0.1 million for the three months ended March 31, 2012 and \$0.1 million for the year ended December 31, 2011 related to short-term borrowings.

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF THE DEBT SECURITIES

General

The debt securities included in this prospectus may be issued in one or more series under an indenture to be entered into by and between us and U.S. Bank, National Association, as trustee. References herein to the Indenture refer to such indenture and references to the Trustee refer to such trustee or any other trustee for any particular series of debt securities issued under the Indenture. The terms of the debt securities of any series will be those specified in or pursuant to the Indenture and in the applicable debt securities of that series and those made part of the Indenture by the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended. In the event that we issue subordinated debt securities, we may issue such securities under a separate indenture.

The following description of selected provisions of the Indenture and the debt securities is not complete, and the description of selected terms of the debt securities of a particular series included in the applicable prospectus supplement also will not be complete. You should review the form of the Indenture and the form of the applicable debt securities, which forms have been or will be filed as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus forms a part or as exhibits to documents which have been or will be incorporated by reference in this prospectus and the applicable prospectus supplement. To obtain a copy of the Indenture or the form of the applicable debt securities, see *Where You Can Find More Information* in this prospectus. The following description of debt securities is, and the description of the debt securities of the particular series in the applicable prospectus supplement will be, qualified in its entirety by reference to all of the provisions of the Indenture and the applicable debt securities, which provisions, including defined terms, are incorporated by reference in this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement. Capitalized terms used but not defined in this section shall have the meanings assigned to those terms in the Indenture.

The following description of debt securities describes general terms and provisions of the series of debt securities to which any prospectus supplement may relate. When the debt securities of a particular series are offered for sale, the specific terms of such debt securities will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement. If any particular terms of such debt securities described in an applicable prospectus supplement differ from any of the terms of the debt securities generally described in this prospectus, then the terms described in the prospectus supplement will supersede the terms described in this prospectus.

General

The debt securities of each series will constitute either our senior or subordinated indebtedness. We may issue an unlimited principal amount of debt securities under the Indenture. The Indenture provides that debt securities of any series may be issued up to the aggregate principal amount which may be authorized from time to time by us. Please read the applicable prospectus supplement relating to the debt securities of the particular series being offered thereby for the specific terms of such debt securities, including, where applicable:

the title of the series of debt securities;

any limit on the aggregate principal amount of debt securities of the series;

the date or dates on which we will pay the principal of and premium, if any, on debt securities of the series, or the method or methods, if any, used to determine such date or dates;

the rate or rates, which may be fixed or variable, at which debt securities of the series will bear interest, if any, or the method or methods, if any, used to determine such rate or rates;

the basis used to calculate interest, if any, on the debt securities of the series if other than a 360-day year of twelve 30-day months;

Edgar Filing: BGC Partners, Inc. - Form 424B3

whether the debt securities will be senior or subordinated obligations of ours and, if subordinated, the subordination provisions thereof;

Table of Contents

the date or dates, if any, from which interest on the debt securities of the series will accrue, or the method or methods, if any, used to determine such date or dates;

the date or dates, if any, on which the interest on the debt securities of the series will be payable and the record dates for any such payment of interest;

the manner in which, or the person to whom, any interest on any bearer security of the series of debt securities will be payable, if different than upon presentation and surrender of the coupons relating to the bearer security;

the terms and conditions on which the debt securities may be convertible into or exchangeable for Class A common stock, if any;

the terms and conditions, if any, upon which we are required to, or may, at our option, redeem debt securities of the series;

the terms and conditions, if any, upon which we will be required to repurchase debt securities of the series at the option of the holders of debt securities of the series;

the terms of any sinking fund or analogous provision;

the portion of the principal amount of the debt securities of the series which will be payable upon acceleration if other than the full principal amount;

the authorized denominations in which the series of debt securities will be issued, if other than minimum denominations of \$2,000 and any integral multiple of \$1,000 in excess thereof, in the case of registered securities, or minimum denominations of \$5,000, in the case of bearer securities;

the place or places where (1) amounts due on the debt securities of the series will be payable, (2) the debt securities of the series may be surrendered for registration of transfer and exchange and, if applicable, for exchange for other securities or property, and (3) notices or demands to or upon us in respect of the debt securities of the series or the Indenture may be served, if different than the corporate trust office of the Trustee;

if other than U.S. dollars, the currency or currencies in which purchases of, and payments on, the debt securities of the series must be made and the ability, if any, of us or the holders of debt securities of the series to elect for payments to be made in any other currency or currencies;

whether the amount of payments on the debt securities of the series may be determined with reference to an index, formula, or other method or methods (any of those debt securities being referred to as Indexed Securities) and the manner used to determine those amounts;

any addition to, modification, or deletion of, any covenant or Event of Default with respect to debt securities of the series;

Edgar Filing: BGC Partners, Inc. - Form 424B3

whether the debt securities of the series will be issuable in registered or bearer form, or both, and whether any debt securities of the series will be issued in temporary or permanent global form and, if so, the identity of the depository for the global debt securities;

whether and under what circumstances we will pay Additional Amounts on the debt securities of the series to any holder who is a United States Alien in respect of any tax, assessment, or other governmental charge and, if so, whether we will have the option to redeem such debt securities rather than pay the Additional Amounts; and

any other terms of debt securities of the series.

As used in this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement relating to an offering of debt securities, references to the principal of and premium, if any, and interest, if any, on the debt securities of a series include Additional Amounts, if any, payable on the debt securities of such series in that context.

Table of Contents

We may issue debt securities as original issue discount securities to be sold at a substantial discount below their principal amount. In the event of an acceleration of the maturity of any original issue discount security, the amount payable to the holder upon acceleration will be determined in the manner described in the applicable prospectus supplement. Material federal income tax and other considerations applicable to original issue discount securities will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement.

The terms of the debt securities of any series may differ from the terms of the debt securities of any other series, and the terms of particular debt securities within any series may differ from each other. Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, we may, without the consent of, or notice to, the holders of the debt securities of any series, reopen an existing series of debt securities and issue additional debt securities of that series.

Other than to the extent provided with respect to the debt securities of a particular series and described in the applicable prospectus supplement, the Indenture will not contain any provisions that would limit our ability to incur indebtedness or to substantially reduce or eliminate our consolidated assets, which may have an adverse effect on the ability of us to service our indebtedness (including the debt securities) or that would afford holders of the debt securities protection in the event of:

a highly leveraged or similar transaction involving us, our management, or any affiliate of any of those parties;

a change of control; or

a reorganization, restructuring, merger, or similar transaction involving us or our affiliates that may adversely affect the holders of our debt securities.

Ranking

The applicable prospectus supplement will indicate the classification of the debt securities as senior debt or subordinated debt. Senior debt will rank on an equal basis with all our other unsecured debt except subordinated debt. Subordinated debt will rank subordinated and junior in right of payment, to the extent set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement, to all our senior debt.

Any senior debt that is unsecured will be effectively subordinated to our secured indebtedness to the extent of the security and all debt securities will be effectively subordinated to all liabilities of our subsidiaries. In the event of any insolvency, bankruptcy, liquidation or other similar proceeding with respect to any such subsidiary, we, as an equity owner of such subsidiary, and therefore holders of our debt will be subject to the prior claims of such subsidiary's creditors, including trade creditors, and any preferred equity holders.

If we default in the payment of any principal of, or premium, if any, or interest on any senior debt when it becomes due and payable after any applicable grace period, then, unless and until the default is cured or waived or ceases to exist, we cannot make a payment on account of or redeem or otherwise acquire the subordinated debt securities.

If there is any insolvency, bankruptcy, liquidation or other similar proceeding relating to us or our property, then all senior debt must be paid in full before any payment may be made to any holders of subordinated debt securities.

Furthermore, if we default in the payment of the principal of and accrued interest on any subordinated debt securities that is declared due and payable upon an event of default under the subordinated debt indenture, holders of all our senior debt will first be entitled to receive payment in full in cash before holders of such subordinated debt can receive any payments.

Table of Contents

Registration, Transfer, Payment and Paying Agent

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, each series of debt securities will be issued in registered form only, without coupons. The Indenture, however, provides that we may also issue debt securities in bearer form only, or in both registered and bearer form. Purchasers of bearer securities will be subject to certification procedures and may be affected by limitations under United States tax laws. The terms of the bearer securities of the particular series and the applicable procedures and limitations will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, registered securities will be issued in minimum denominations of \$2,000 or any integral multiple of \$1,000 in excess thereof, and bearer securities will be issued in minimum denominations of \$5,000.

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, the debt securities will be payable and may be surrendered for registration of transfer or exchange and, if applicable, for conversion into or exchange for shares of our Class A common stock or other securities or property, at an office or agency maintained by the Trustee in New York, New York. However, we may, at our option, may make payments of interest on any interest payment date on any registered security by check mailed to the address of the person entitled to receive that payment or by wire transfer to an account maintained by the payee with a bank located in the United States.

Any interest not punctually paid or duly provided for on any interest payment date with respect to the debt securities of any series will forthwith cease to be payable to the holders of those debt securities on the applicable regular record date and may either be paid to the persons in whose names those debt securities are registered at the close of business on a special record date for the payment of the interest not punctually paid or duly provided for to be fixed by the Trustee, notice whereof shall be given to the holders of those debt securities not less than 10 days prior to the special record date, or may be paid at any time in any other lawful manner, all as completely described in the Indenture.

Subject to certain limitations imposed on debt securities issued in book-entry form, the debt securities of any series will be exchangeable for other debt securities of the same series and of a like aggregate principal amount and tenor of different authorized denominations upon surrender of those debt securities at the designated place or places. In addition, subject to certain limitations imposed upon debt securities issued in book-entry form, the debt securities of any series may be surrendered for registration of transfer or exchange thereof at the designated place or places if duly endorsed or accompanied by a written instrument of transfer. No service charge shall be made for any registration of transfer or exchange, redemption or repayment of debt securities, or for any exchange of debt securities for other securities or property, but we may require payment of a sum sufficient to cover any tax or other governmental charge that may be imposed in connection with certain of those transactions.

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will not be required to:

issue, register the transfer of or exchange debt securities of any series during a period beginning at the opening of business 15 days before any selection of debt securities of that series of like tenor and terms to be redeemed and ending at the close of business on the day of that selection;

register the transfer of or exchange any registered security, or portion of any registered security, called for redemption, except the unredeemed portion of any registered security being redeemed in part; or

issue, register the transfer of or exchange a debt security which has been surrendered for repurchase at the option of the holder, except the portion, if any, of the debt security not to be repurchased.

Calculation Agents

Calculations relating to floating rate debt securities and Indexed Securities will be made by the calculation agent, an institution that we appoint as our agent for this purpose. We may appoint one of our affiliates as

Table of Contents

calculation agent. We may appoint a different institution to serve as calculation agent from time to time after the original issue date of the debt security without your consent and without notifying you of the change. The initial calculation agent, if any, will be identified in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Book-Entry Debt Securities

The debt securities of a series may be issued in whole or in part in the form of one or more global debt securities. Global debt securities will be deposited with, or on behalf of, a depository identified in the applicable prospectus supplement. Global debt securities may be issued in either registered or bearer form and in either temporary or permanent form. Unless and until it is exchanged in whole or in part for individual certificates evidencing debt securities, a global debt security may not be transferred except as a whole by the depository to its nominee or by the nominee to the depository or by the depository or its nominee to a successor depository or to a nominee of the successor depository.

We anticipate that global debt securities will be deposited with, or on behalf of, The Depository Trust Company, which we refer to as "DTC," New York, New York, and that global debt securities will be registered in the name of DTC's nominee, Cede & Co. We also anticipate that the following provisions will apply to the depository arrangements with respect to global debt securities. Additional or differing terms of the depository arrangements will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement.

DTC has advised us that it is:

a limited-purpose trust company organized under the New York Banking Law;

a banking organization within the meaning of the New York Banking Law;

a member of the Federal Reserve System;

a clearing corporation within the meaning of the New York Uniform Commercial Code; and

a clearing agency registered pursuant to the provisions of Section 17A of the Exchange Act.

DTC holds securities that its participants deposit with DTC. DTC also facilitates the settlement among its participants of securities transactions, including transfers and pledges, in deposited securities through electronic computerized book-entry changes in participants' accounts, which eliminates the need for physical movement of securities certificates. Direct participants include securities brokers and dealers, banks, trust companies, clearing corporations, and other organizations. DTC is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation, which we refer to as "DTCC." DTCC is the holding company for DTC, National Securities Clearing Corporation and Fixed Income Clearing Corporation, all of which are registered clearing agencies. DTCC is owned by the users of its regulated subsidiaries. Access to the DTC system is also available to others, which we refer to in this prospectus as indirect participants, that clear transactions through or maintain a custodial relationship with a direct participant either directly or indirectly. Indirect participants include securities brokers and dealers, banks and trust companies. The rules applicable to DTC and its participants are on file with the SEC.

Purchases of debt securities within the DTC system must be made by or through direct participants, which will receive a credit for the debt securities on DTC's records. The ownership interest of the actual purchaser or beneficial owner of a debt security is, in turn, recorded on the direct and indirect participants' records. Beneficial owners will not receive written confirmation from DTC of their purchases, but beneficial owners are expected to receive written confirmations providing details of the transactions, as well as periodic statements of their holdings, from the direct or indirect participants through which they purchased the debt securities. Transfers of ownership interests in debt securities are to be accomplished by entries made on the books of participants acting on behalf of beneficial owners. Beneficial owners will not receive certificates representing their ownership interests in the debt securities except in the limited circumstances described below.

Table of Contents

To facilitate subsequent transfers, all debt securities deposited by participants with DTC will be registered in the name of DTC's nominee, Cede & Co. The deposit of debt securities with DTC and their registration in the name of Cede & Co. will not change the beneficial ownership of the debt securities. DTC has no knowledge of the actual beneficial owners of the debt securities. DTC's records reflect only the identity of the direct participants to whose accounts the debt securities are credited. Those participants may or may not be the beneficial owners. The participants are responsible for keeping account of their holdings on behalf of their customers.

Conveyance of notices and other communications by DTC to direct participants, by direct participants to indirect participants and by direct and indirect participants to beneficial owners will be governed by arrangements among them, subject to any legal requirements in effect from time to time.

Redemption notices shall be sent to DTC or its nominee. If less than all of the debt securities of a series are being redeemed, DTC will reduce the amount of the interest of direct participants in the debt securities in accordance with its procedures.

A beneficial owner of debt securities shall give notice to elect to have its debt securities repurchased or tendered, through its participant, to the Trustee and shall effect delivery of such debt securities by causing the direct participant to transfer the participant's interest in such debt securities, on DTC's records, to the Trustee. The requirement for physical delivery of debt securities in connection with a repurchase or tender will be deemed satisfied when the ownership rights in such debt securities are transferred by direct participants on DTC's records and followed by a book-entry credit of such debt securities to the Trustee's DTC account.

In any case where a vote may be required with respect to the debt securities of any series, neither DTC nor Cede & Co. will give consents for or vote such global debt securities. Under its usual procedures, DTC will mail an omnibus proxy to us as soon as possible after the record date. The omnibus proxy assigns the consenting or voting rights of Cede & Co. to those direct participants to whose accounts the debt securities are credited on the record date identified in a listing attached to the omnibus proxy.

Principal of and premium, if any, and interest, if any, on the global debt securities will be paid to Cede & Co., as nominee of DTC. DTC's practice is to credit direct participants' accounts on the relevant payment date unless DTC has reason to believe that it will not receive payments on the payment date. Payments by direct and indirect participants to beneficial owners will be governed by standing instructions and customary practices, as is the case with securities held for the account of customers in bearer form or registered in street name. Those payments will be the responsibility of participants and not of DTC or us, subject to any legal requirements in effect from time to time. Payment of principal, premium, if any, and interest, if any, to Cede & Co. is our responsibility, disbursement of payments to direct participants is the responsibility of DTC, and disbursement of payments to the beneficial owners is the responsibility of direct and indirect participants.

Except as described in this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement, owners of beneficial interests in a global debt security will not be entitled to have debt securities registered in their names and will not receive physical delivery of debt securities. Accordingly, each beneficial owner must rely on the procedures of DTC to exercise any rights under the debt securities and the Indenture.

The laws of some jurisdictions may require that some purchasers of securities take physical delivery of securities in definitive form. These laws may impair the ability to transfer or pledge beneficial interests in global debt securities.

DTC is under no obligation to provide its services as depository for the debt securities of any series and may discontinue providing its services at any time. Neither we nor the Trustee will have any responsibility for the performance by DTC or its direct or indirect participants under the rules and procedures governing DTC. As noted above, owners of beneficial interests in a global debt security will not receive certificates representing their

Table of Contents

interests. However, we will prepare and deliver certificates for the debt securities of that series in exchange for beneficial interests in the global debt securities if:

DTC notifies us that it is unwilling or unable to continue as a depository for the global debt securities of any series or if DTC ceases to be a clearing agency registered under the Exchange Act and a successor depository is not appointed by us within 90 days after the notification or of our becoming aware of DTC's ceasing to be so registered, as the case may be;

we determine, in our sole discretion, not to have the debt securities of any series represented by one or more global debt securities; or

an Event of Default has occurred and is continuing with respect to the debt securities of any series, and DTC wishes to exchange such global debt securities for definitive certificated debt securities.

Any beneficial interest in a global debt security that is exchangeable under the circumstances described in the preceding sentence will be exchangeable for debt securities in definitive certificated form registered in the names that the depository shall direct. It is expected that these directions will be based upon directions received by the depository from its participants with respect to ownership of beneficial interests in the global debt securities.

We obtained the information in this section and elsewhere in this prospectus concerning DTC and DTC's book-entry system from sources that we believe to be reliable, but neither we nor any applicable underwriters, agents or dealers take any responsibility for the accuracy of this information.

Outstanding Debt Securities

In determining whether the holders of the requisite principal amount of outstanding debt securities have given any request, demand, authorization, direction, notice, consent, or waiver under the Indenture:

the principal amount of an original issue discount security that shall be deemed to be outstanding for these purposes shall be that portion of the principal amount of the original issue discount security that would be due and payable upon acceleration of the original issue discount security as of the date of the determination;

the principal amount of any Indexed Security that shall be deemed to be outstanding for these purposes shall be the principal amount of the Indexed Security determined on the date of its original issuance;

the principal amount of a debt security denominated in a foreign currency shall be the U.S. dollar equivalent, determined on the date of its original issuance, of the principal amount of the debt security; and

a debt security owned by us or any obligor on the debt security or any affiliate of ours or such other obligor shall be deemed not to be outstanding.

Redemption and Repurchase

The debt securities of any series may be redeemable at our option or may be subject to mandatory redemption by us as required by a sinking fund or otherwise. In addition, the debt securities of any series may be subject to repurchase by us at the option of the holders. The applicable prospectus supplement will describe the terms and conditions regarding any optional or mandatory redemption or option to repurchase the debt securities of the related series.

Exchange

Edgar Filing: BGC Partners, Inc. - Form 424B3

The terms and conditions, if any, on which debt securities of any series are convertible into or exchangeable for shares of our Class A common stock or other securities or property will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Table of Contents

Certain Covenants

Any material covenants applicable to the debt securities of any series will be specified in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Events of Default

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, an Event of Default with respect to the debt securities of any series is defined in the Indenture as being:

- (1) failure to pay interest for 30 days after the date payment is due and payable on any debt security of that series;
- (2) failure to pay principal or premium, if any, on any debt security of that series when due, either at maturity, upon any redemption, by declaration or otherwise;
- (3) failure to make any sinking fund payment or payment under any analogous provision when due with respect to any debt security of that series;
- (4) failure to perform any other covenant for 60 days after notice of such performance was required;
- (5) specified events of bankruptcy, insolvency, or reorganization with respect to us; or
- (6) any other Event of Default established for the debt securities of that series.

No Event of Default with respect to any particular series of debt securities necessarily constitutes an Event of Default with respect to any other series of debt securities. The Trustee is required to give notice to holders of the debt securities of any series within 90 days after the Trustee has knowledge of a default relating to such debt securities; *provided, however*, that the Trustee may withhold such notice except a default in payment of principal, premium, if any, interest, if any, Additional Amounts, if any, or sinking fund payments, if any, in respect of such debt securities or a default or in the delivery of securities or property upon exchange of such debt securities in accordance with their terms, if the Trustee, in good faith, determines it is in the best interest of such holders to do so.

If an Event of Default specified in clause (5) above occurs with respect to us and is continuing, then the principal of all the debt securities and interest, if any, thereon shall automatically become immediately due and payable. If any other Event of Default with respect to the debt securities of any series occurs and is continuing, either the Trustee or the holders of at least 25% in aggregate principal amount of the debt securities of that series then outstanding may declare the principal of, or if debt securities of that series are original issue discount securities, such lesser amount as may be specified in the terms of that series of debt securities, and interest, if any, thereon to be due and payable immediately. However, upon specified conditions, the holders of a majority in aggregate principal amount of the debt securities of that series then outstanding may rescind and annul any such acceleration and its consequences.

The Indenture provides that no holders of debt securities of any series may institute any proceedings, judicial or otherwise, with respect to the Indenture, or for the appointment of a receiver or Trustee, or for any remedy thereunder, except in the case of failure of the Trustee, for 60 days, to act after it has received a written request to institute proceedings in respect of an Event of Default from the holders of at least 25% in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series, as well as an offer of indemnity reasonably satisfactory to it, and no inconsistent direction has been given to the Trustee during such 60-day period by the holders of a majority in aggregate principal amount of the debt securities of that series. Notwithstanding any other provision of the Indenture, the holder of a debt security will have the right, which is absolute and unconditional, to receive payment of the principal of and premium, if any, and interest, if any, and Additional Amounts, if any, on that debt security on the respective due dates for those payments and, in the case of any debt security which is convertible into or exchangeable for shares of our Class A common stock or other securities or

Table of Contents

property, to convert or exchange that debt security in accordance with its terms, and to institute suit for the enforcement of those payments and any right to effect such conversion or exchange, and this right shall not be impaired without the consent of such holder.

Subject to the provisions of the Trust Indenture Act requiring the Trustee, during the continuance of an Event of Default under the Indenture, to act with the requisite standard of care, the Trustee is under no obligation to exercise any of its rights or powers under the Indenture at the request or direction of any of the holders of debt securities of any series unless those holders have offered the Trustee indemnity reasonably satisfactory to it. The holders of a majority in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series will have the right to direct the time, method and place of conducting any proceeding for any remedy available to the Trustee, or of exercising any trust or power conferred upon the Trustee.

Within 120 days after the close of each fiscal year, we must deliver to the Trustee an officers' certificate stating whether or not each certifying officer has knowledge of any default under the Indenture and, if so, specifying each such default and the nature and status thereof.

Modification, Waivers, and Meetings

The Indenture permits us and the Trustee, with the consent of the holders of a majority in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of each series issued under the Indenture and affected by a modification or amendment (voting as separate classes), to modify or amend any of the provisions of the Indenture or of the debt securities of the applicable series or the rights of the holders of the debt securities of the applicable series under the Indenture. However, without, in each case, obtaining the consent of the holder of each outstanding debt security affected by a modification or amendment, no such modification or amendment shall:

change the stated maturity of the principal of, or premium, if any, or any installment of interest, if any, on, or any Additional Amounts, if any, with respect to any debt securities;

reduce the principal of or any premium on any debt securities or reduce the rate (or modify the calculation of such rate) of interest on or the redemption or repurchase price of any debt securities, or any Additional Amounts, if any, with respect to any debt securities, or change our obligation to pay any Additional Amounts;

reduce the amount of principal of any original issue discount securities that would be due and payable upon acceleration of the maturity of any debt securities;

adversely affect any right of repayment or repurchase at the option of any holder;

change any subordination provisions applicable to any debt securities;

change any place where or the currency in which any debt securities are payable;

adversely affect the right, if any, of holders to convert or exchange any debt securities for shares of our Class A common stock or other securities or property in accordance with their terms;

impair the holder's right to institute suit to enforce the payment of any debt securities on or after their stated maturity or the right to convert or exchange any debt securities for shares of our Class A common stock or other securities or property in accordance with their terms;

Edgar Filing: BGC Partners, Inc. - Form 424B3

reduce the percentage of the outstanding debt securities of any series whose holders must consent to any modification or amendment or any waiver of compliance with specific provisions of the Indenture or specified defaults under the Indenture and their consequences; or

reduce the requirements for a quorum or voting at a meeting of holders of the applicable debt securities.

Table of Contents

The Indenture also contains provisions permitting us and the Trustee, without the consent of the holders of any debt securities, to modify or amend the Indenture, among other things:

to add to the Events of Default or covenants in a manner that benefits the holders of all or any series of debt securities issued under the Indenture;

to provide for security of debt securities of any series or add guarantees;

to add to or change any provisions of the Indenture to facilitate the issuance of bearer securities;

to establish the form or terms of debt securities of any series and any related coupons;

to cure any ambiguity or correct or supplement any provision in the Indenture which may be defective or inconsistent with other provisions in the Indenture, or to make any other provisions with respect to matters or questions arising under the Indenture, or to make any change necessary to comply with any requirement of the SEC in connection with the Indenture under the Trust Indenture Act, in each case which shall not adversely affect the interests of the holders of any series of debt securities;

to amend or supplement any provision contained in the Indenture, provided that the amendment or supplement does not apply to any outstanding debt securities issued before the date of the amendment or supplement and entitled to the benefits of that provision; or

to conform the terms of the Indenture or the debt securities to the description thereof contained in any prospectus or any applicable prospectus supplement relating to the offer and sale of those debt securities.

The holders of a majority in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series may waive our compliance with some of the restrictive provisions of the Indenture, which may include covenants, if any, which are specified in the applicable prospectus supplement. The holders of a majority in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series may, on behalf of all holders of debt securities of that series, waive any past default under the Indenture with respect to the debt securities of that series and its consequences, except a default (i) in the payment of the principal of, or premium, if any, or interest, if any, on the debt securities of that series, (ii) in the delivery of shares of our Class A common stock or other securities or property upon the conversion or exchange of any debt securities of that series in accordance with their terms, or (iii) in respect of a covenant or provision which cannot be modified or amended without the consent of the holder of each outstanding debt security of the affected series.

The Indenture contains provisions for convening meetings of the holders of a series of debt securities. A meeting may be called at any time by the Trustee, and also, upon our request, or the request of holders of at least 10% in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of a series. Notice of a meeting must be given in accordance with the provisions of the Indenture. Except for any consent which must be given by the holder of each outstanding debt security affected in the manner described above, any resolution presented at a meeting or adjourned meeting duly reconvened at which a quorum, as described below, is present may be adopted by the affirmative vote of the holders of a majority in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series. However, any resolution with respect to any request, demand, authorization, direction, notice, consent, waiver, or other action which may be made, given or taken by the holders of a specified percentage, other than a majority, in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of a series may be adopted at a meeting or adjourned meeting duly reconvened at which a quorum is present by the affirmative vote of the holders of that specified percentage in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series. Any resolution passed or decision taken at any meeting of holders of debt securities of any series duly held in accordance with the Indenture will be binding on all holders of debt securities of that series and the related coupons, if any. The quorum at any meeting called to adopt a resolution, and at any reconvened meeting, will be persons holding or representing a majority in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of a series, subject to exceptions; provided, however, that if any action is to be taken at that meeting with respect to a consent or waiver which may be given by the holders of a supermajority in aggregate principal

Table of Contents

amount of the outstanding debt securities of a series, the persons holding or representing that specified supermajority percentage in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series will constitute a quorum.

Discharge, Defeasance, and Covenant Defeasance

Satisfaction and Discharge

Upon our direction, the Indenture shall cease to be of further effect with respect to the debt securities of any series specified by us, subject to the survival of specified provisions of the Indenture, including our obligation to repurchase such debt securities at the option of the holders thereof or to convert into or exchange such debt securities for shares of our Class A common stock or other securities or property in accordance with their terms, if applicable, and our obligation to pay Additional Amounts, if any, in respect of such debt securities to the extent described below, when:

either

- (1) all outstanding debt securities of that series and, in the case of bearer securities, all related coupons have been delivered to the Trustee for cancellation, subject to exceptions, or
- (2) all debt securities of that series and, if applicable, any related coupons have become due and payable or will become due and payable at their maturity within one year or are to be called for redemption within one year, and we have deposited with the Trustee, in trust, funds in the currency in which the debt securities of that series are payable in an amount sufficient to pay the entire indebtedness on the debt securities of that series and, if applicable, related coupons, including the principal thereof and premium, if any, and interest, if any, thereon, and, to the extent that (x) the debt securities of that series provide for the payment of Additional Amounts and (y) the amount of the Additional Amounts which are or will be payable is at the time of deposit reasonably determinable by us, in the exercise of our sole discretion, those Additional Amounts, to the date of such deposit, if the debt securities of that series have become due and payable, or to the maturity or redemption date of the debt securities of that series, as the case may be;

we have paid all other sums payable under the Indenture with respect to the debt securities of that series (including amounts payable to the Trustee); and

the Trustee has received an officers' certificate and an opinion of counsel to the effect that all conditions precedent to the satisfaction and discharge of the Indenture have been satisfied.

If the debt securities of any series provide for the payment of Additional Amounts, we will remain obligated, following the deposit described above, to pay Additional Amounts on those debt securities to the extent that they exceed the amount deposited in respect of those Additional Amounts as described above.

Defeasance and Covenant Defeasance

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, we may elect with respect to the debt securities of the particular series either:

to defease and discharge us from any and all obligations with respect to those debt securities (full defeasance), except for, among other things:

Edgar Filing: BGC Partners, Inc. - Form 424B3

- (1) the obligation to pay Additional Amounts, if any, upon the occurrence of specified events of taxation, assessment, or governmental charge with respect to payments on those debt securities to the extent that those Additional Amounts exceed the amount deposited in respect of those amounts as provided below;

- (2) the obligations to register the transfer or exchange of those debt securities;

Table of Contents

- (3) the obligation to replace temporary or mutilated, destroyed, lost, or stolen debt securities;
- (4) the obligation to maintain an office or agency in respect of those debt securities;
- (5) the obligation to hold moneys for payment in respect of those debt securities in trust; and
- (6) the obligation, if applicable, to repurchase those debt securities at the option of the holders thereof or to convert or exchange those debt securities for shares of our Class A common stock or other securities or property in accordance with their terms, or

to be released from our obligations with respect to those debt securities under certain covenants in the Indenture and, if applicable, other covenants as may be specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, and any omission to comply with those obligations shall not constitute a default or an Event of Default with respect to those debt securities (covenant defeasance), in either case upon the irrevocable deposit with the Trustee, or other qualifying Trustee, in trust for that purpose, of an amount in the currency in which those debt securities are payable at maturity or, if applicable, upon redemption, and/or government obligations which through the payment of principal and interest in accordance with their terms will provide money, in an amount sufficient to pay the principal of and any premium and any interest on, and, to the extent that (x) those debt securities provide for the payment of Additional Amounts and (y) the amount of the Additional Amounts which are or will be payable is at the time of deposit reasonably determinable by us, in the exercise of our sole discretion, those Additional Amounts, and any mandatory sinking fund or analogous payments on those debt securities, on the due dates for those payments, whether at maturity, upon redemption, upon repayment at the option of the holder or otherwise.

The full defeasance or covenant defeasance described above shall only be effective if, among other things:

it shall not result in a breach or violation of, or constitute a default under, the Indenture or any other material agreement or instrument to which we or any of our subsidiaries are a party or are bound;

in the case of full defeasance, we shall have delivered to the Trustee an opinion of independent counsel reasonably acceptable to the Trustee confirming that:

- (1) we have received from, or there has been published by, the Internal Revenue Service a ruling; or

(2) since the date of the Indenture, there has been a change in applicable federal income tax law, in either case to the effect that, and based on this ruling or change the opinion of counsel shall confirm that, the holders of the debt securities of the applicable series will not recognize income, gain or loss for U.S. federal income tax purposes as a result of the full defeasance and will be subject to U.S. federal income tax on the same amounts, in the same manner and at the same times as would have been the case if the defeasance had not occurred;

in the case of covenant defeasance, we shall have delivered to the Trustee an opinion of independent counsel reasonably acceptable to the Trustee to the effect that the holders of the debt securities of the applicable series will not recognize income, gain or loss for U.S. federal income tax purposes as a result of the covenant defeasance and will be subject to U.S. federal income tax on the same amounts, in the same manner and at the same times as would have been the case if the covenant defeasance had not occurred;

Edgar Filing: BGC Partners, Inc. - Form 424B3

if the cash and government obligations deposited are sufficient to pay the outstanding debt securities of the applicable series on a particular redemption date, we shall have given the Trustee irrevocable instructions to redeem those debt securities on that date;

no Event of Default or default which with notice or lapse of time or both would become an Event of Default with respect to debt securities of the applicable series shall have occurred and be continuing on the date of the deposit into trust, and, solely in the case of full defeasance, no Event of Default arising from specified events of bankruptcy, insolvency, or reorganization with respect to us or any of our Significant Subsidiaries or default which with notice or lapse of time or both would become such an Event of Default shall have occurred and be continuing during the period ending on the 91st day after the date of the deposit into trust; and

Table of Contents

we shall have delivered to the Trustee an officers' certificate and an opinion of counsel to the effect that all conditions precedent to the full defeasance or covenant defeasance, as the case may be, have been satisfied.

In the event we effect covenant defeasance with respect to debt securities of any series and those debt securities are declared due and payable because of the occurrence of any Event of Default other than an Event of Default with respect to the covenants as to which covenant defeasance has been effected, which covenants would no longer be applicable to the debt securities of that series after covenant defeasance, the amount of monies and/or government obligations deposited with the Trustee to effect covenant defeasance may not be sufficient to pay amounts due on the debt securities of that series at the time of any acceleration resulting from that Event of Default. However, we would remain liable to make payment of those amounts due at the time of acceleration.

The applicable prospectus supplement may further describe the provisions, if any, permitting or restricting full defeasance or covenant defeasance with respect to the debt securities of a particular series.

Concerning the Trustee

U.S. Bank, National Association is the Trustee under the Indenture. We maintain corporate trust relationships in the ordinary course of business with the Trustee.

The Indenture provides that there may be more than one Trustee under the Indenture, each with respect to one or more series of debt securities. If there are different Trustees for different series of debt securities, each Trustee will be a Trustee separate and apart from any other Trustee under the Indenture. Unless otherwise indicated in any applicable prospectus supplement, any action permitted to be taken by a Trustee may be taken by such Trustee only with respect to the one or more series of debt securities for which it is the Trustee under the Indenture. Any Trustee under the Indenture may resign or be removed with respect to one or more series of debt securities. All payments of principal of, and premium, if any, and interest on, and all registration, transfer, exchange, authentication and delivery (including authentication and delivery on original issuance of the debt securities) of, the debt securities of a series will be effected by the Trustee with respect to that series at an office designated by the trustee in New York, New York.

Under the Trust Indenture Act, the Indenture is deemed to contain limitations on the right of the Trustee, should it become a creditor of ours, to obtain payment of claims in some cases or to realize on certain property received in respect of any such claim as security or otherwise. The Trustee may engage in other transactions with us. If it acquires any conflicting interest relating to any of its duties with respect to the debt securities, however, it must eliminate the conflict or resign as Trustee.

The holders of a majority in aggregate principal amount of any series of debt securities then outstanding will have the right to direct the time, method and place of conducting any proceeding for exercising any remedy available to the Trustee with respect to such series of debt securities, provided that the direction would not conflict with any rule of law or with the Indenture or with any series of debt securities or with any series of debt securities, such direction would not be unduly prejudicial to the rights of other holders of the debt securities (or any other series), and the Trustee may take any other action deemed proper by the Trustee which is not inconsistent with such direction. The Trustee will be under no obligation to exercise any of its rights or powers under the Indenture at the request of any of the holders of the debt securities of any series, unless they shall have offered to the Trustee security and indemnity reasonably satisfactory to the Trustee.

Governing Law

The Indenture and the debt securities will be governed by, and construed in accordance with, the laws of the State of New York, without regard to the conflicts of laws principles thereof.

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK

The following summary is a description of the material terms of our capital stock. Copies of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws and other documents referred to herein are incorporated by reference as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus forms a part.

Our Capital Stock

The following descriptions of our Class A common stock, Class B common stock, and preferred stock and of the relevant provisions of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws and other documents are summaries thereof and are qualified in their entirety by reference to our certificate of incorporation and bylaws and such other documents, copies of which are incorporated by reference as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus forms a part, and applicable law. Our certificate of incorporation and bylaws are each an amendment and restatement of the eSpeed certificate of incorporation and bylaws.

Our authorized capital stock consists of 600 million shares of common stock, consisting of 500 million shares of our Class A common stock, par value \$0.01 per share, and 100 million shares of our Class B common stock, par value \$0.01 per share, and 50 million shares of preferred stock, par value \$0.01 per share.

Common Stock

As of May 31, 2012, there were 105,528,944 shares of our Class A common stock outstanding and 34,848,107 shares of our Class B common stock outstanding. The holders of Class A common stock are generally entitled to one vote per share on all matters to be voted upon by the stockholders as a group, entitling holders of Class A common stock to approximately 23.2% of our voting power as of such date, and do not have cumulative voting rights. The holders of Class B common stock are generally entitled to ten votes per share on all matters to be voted upon by the stockholders as a group, entitling holders of Class B common stock to 76.8% of our voting power as of such date, and do not have cumulative voting rights. Cantor and CFGM, the managing general partner of Cantor and an entity controlled by our Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Howard W. Lutnick, are the only holders of Class B common stock. Class B common stock generally votes together with Class A common stock on all matters submitted to the vote of Class A common stockholders.

Each share of our Class A common stock is equivalent to a share of our Class B common stock for purposes of economic rights. Subject to preferences that may be applicable to any outstanding preferred stock, the holders of shares of Class A common stock and Class B common stock are entitled to receive ratably such dividends, if any, as may be declared from time to time by our board of directors out of funds legally available therefor. See Dividend Policy and Price Range of Class A Common Stock. In the event of our liquidation, dissolution or winding up, the holders of shares of Class A common stock and Class B common stock are entitled to share ratably in all assets remaining after payment of liabilities, subject to prior rights of preferred stock, if any, then outstanding.

Shares of our Class A common stock are not subject to any conversion right. Our certificate of incorporation provides that each share of our Class B common stock is convertible at any time, at the option of the holder, into one share of Class A common stock. Each share of Class B common stock will automatically convert into one share of Class A common stock upon any sale, pledge or other transfer, which we refer to as a transfer, whether or not for value, by the initial registered holder, other than any transfer by the initial holder to (1) Cantor, (2) any entity controlled by Cantor or by Mr. Lutnick or (3) Mr. Lutnick, his spouse, his estate, any of his descendants, any of his relatives or any trust established for his benefit or for the benefit of his spouse, any of his descendants or any of his relatives.

Any holder of shares of our Class B common stock may pledge his, her or its shares of Class B common stock, as the case may be, to a pledgee pursuant to a bona fide pledge of the shares as collateral security for indebtedness due to the pledgee so long as the shares are not transferred to or registered in the name of the

Table of Contents

pledgee. In the event of any pledge of shares of Class B common stock meeting these requirements, the pledged shares will not be converted automatically into shares of our Class A common stock. If the pledged shares of Class B common stock become subject to any foreclosure, realization or other similar action by the pledgee, they will be converted automatically into shares of Class A common stock upon the occurrence of that action. The automatic conversion provisions in our certificate of incorporation may not be amended, altered, changed or repealed without the approval of the holders of a majority of the voting power of all outstanding shares of Class A common stock.

None of the shares of our Class A common stock or our Class B common stock has any pre-emptive or other subscription rights. There will be no redemption or sinking fund provisions applicable to shares of Class A common stock or Class B common stock. All outstanding shares of Class A common stock and Class B common stock are fully paid and non-assessable.

Preferred Stock

Our board of directors has the authority to cause us to issue preferred stock in one or more classes or series and to fix the designations, powers, preferences and rights, and the qualifications, limitations or restrictions thereof, including dividend rights, dividend rates, terms of redemption, redemption prices, conversion rights and liquidation preferences of the shares constituting any class or series, without further vote or action by the stockholders. The issuance of preferred stock pursuant to such blank check provisions may have the effect of delaying, deferring or preventing a change of control of us without further action by our stockholders and may adversely affect the voting and other rights of the holders of shares of our Class A common stock. At present, we have no plans to issue any preferred stock.

Anti-Takeover Effects of Delaware Law, Our Certificate of Incorporation and Bylaws and the Convertible Notes

Some provisions of the Delaware General Corporation Law, which we refer to as the DGCL, our certificate of incorporation and bylaws and the convertible notes could make the following more difficult:

acquisition of us by means of a tender offer;

acquisition of us by means of a proxy contest or otherwise; or

removal of our incumbent officers and directors.

These provisions, summarized below, may discourage coercive takeover practices and inadequate takeover bids. These provisions may also encourage persons seeking to acquire control of us to first negotiate with our board of directors. We believe that the benefits of increased protection give us the potential ability to negotiate with the proponent of an unfriendly or unsolicited proposal to acquire or restructure us and outweigh the disadvantages of discouraging those proposals because negotiation of them could result in an improvement of their terms.

Delaware Anti-Takeover Law

We are subject to Section 203 of the DGCL. In general, Section 203 of the DGCL prohibits a publicly held Delaware corporation from engaging in a business combination with an interested stockholder for a period of three years following the date the person became an interested stockholder, unless the business combination or the transaction in which the person became an interested stockholder is approved in a prescribed manner. Generally, a business combination includes a merger, asset or stock sale or other transaction resulting in a financial benefit to the interested stockholder. An interested stockholder is a person who, together with affiliates and associates, owns 15% or more of a corporation's outstanding voting stock, or was the owner of 15% or more of a corporation's outstanding voting stock at any time within the prior three years, other than interested stockholders prior to the time our Class A common stock was traded on the Nasdaq Stock Market. The existence

Table of Contents

of this provision would be expected to have an anti-takeover effect with respect to transactions not approved in advance by our board of directors, including discouraging takeover attempts that might result in a premium over the market price for shares of Class A common stock.

Certificate of Incorporation and Bylaws

Our bylaws provide that special meetings of stockholders may be called only by the Chairman of our board of directors, or in the event the Chairman of our board of directors is unavailable, by the Chief Executive Officer or by the holders of a majority of the voting power of our Class B common stock, which is held by Cantor and CFGM. In addition, as discussed above, our certificate of incorporation permits us to issue blank check preferred stock.

Our bylaws require advance written notice prior to a meeting of our stockholders of a proposal or director nomination which a stockholder desires to present at such a meeting, which generally must be received by our Secretary not later than 120 days prior to the first anniversary of the date of our proxy statement for the preceding year's annual meeting. Our bylaws provide that all amendments to our bylaws must be approved by either the holders of a majority of the voting power of all of our outstanding capital stock entitled to vote or by a majority of our board of directors.

The Convertible Notes

Pursuant to the terms of the convertible notes, holders of the convertible notes will have the right to require us to repurchase all or a portion of such notes upon the occurrence of a fundamental change (as defined in the respective Indentures governing the convertible notes) at 100% of their principal amount, plus accrued and unpaid interest. In addition, if a make-whole fundamental change occurs (as defined in the respective Indentures) prior to maturity of each of the convertible notes, under certain circumstances we will increase the conversion rate by a number of additional shares of our Class A common stock (as set forth in a table in the respective Indentures) for convertible notes converted in connection with such make-whole fundamental change. The fundamental change purchase rights and the provisions requiring an increase to the conversion rate for conversions in connection with make-whole fundamental changes may in certain circumstances delay or prevent a takeover of us and/or the removal of incumbent management that might otherwise be beneficial to investors.

In addition, to the extent that Cantor or its affiliates continue to hold the 8.75% convertible notes, these provisions may enhance Cantor's control of us even if Cantor were to reduce its voting power in us by, among other things, converting shares of our Class B common stock held by it into shares of our Class A common stock or selling or distributing shares of Class A common stock.

Corporate Opportunity

Our certificate of incorporation provides that no Cantor Company (as defined below) or any of the representatives (as defined below) of a Cantor Company will owe any fiduciary duty to, nor will any Cantor Company or any of their respective representatives be liable for breach of fiduciary duty to, us or any of our stockholders, including with respect to a corporate opportunity, except as described below. To the extent that any representative of a Cantor Company also serves as our director or officer, such person will owe fiduciary duties to us in his or her capacity as our director or officer. In addition, none of any Cantor Company or any of their respective representatives will owe any duty to refrain from engaging in the same or similar activities or lines of business as us, or doing business with any of our clients or customers.

If a third party presents a corporate opportunity (as defined below) to a person who is a representative of ours and a representative of a Cantor Company expressly and solely in such person's capacity as a representative

Table of Contents

of us, and such person acts in good faith in a manner consistent with the policy that such corporate opportunity belongs to us, then such person:

will be deemed to have fully satisfied and fulfilled any fiduciary duty that such person has to us as a representative of us with respect to such corporate opportunity;

will not be liable to us or any of our stockholders for breach of fiduciary duty by reason of such person's action or inaction with respect to the corporate opportunity;

will be deemed to have acted in good faith and in a manner that such person reasonably believed to be in, and not opposed to, our best interests; and

will be deemed not to have breached such person's duty of loyalty to us and our stockholders, and not to have derived an improper personal benefit therefrom.

A Cantor Company may pursue such a corporate opportunity if we decide not to.

If a corporate opportunity is not presented to a person who is both a representative of ours and a representative of a Cantor Company and expressly and solely in such person's capacity as a representative of us, such person will not be obligated to present the corporate opportunity to us or to act as if such corporate opportunity belongs to us, and such person:

will be deemed to have fully satisfied and fulfilled any fiduciary duty that such person has to us as a representative of us with respect to such corporate opportunity;

will not be liable to us or any of our stockholders for breach of fiduciary duty by reason of such person's action or inaction with respect to such corporate opportunity;

will be deemed to have acted in good faith and in a manner that such person reasonably believed to be in, and not opposed to, our best interests; and

will be deemed not to have breached a duty of loyalty to us and our stockholders, and not to have derived an improper personal benefit therefrom.

For purposes of the above:

Cantor Company means Cantor and any of its affiliates (other than, if applicable, the Company and its affiliates);

representatives means, with respect to any person, the directors, officers, employees, general partners or managing member of such person; and

corporate opportunity means any business opportunity that we are financially able to undertake that is, from its nature, in our lines of business, is of practical advantage to us and is one in which we have an interest or a reasonable expectancy, and in which, by

Edgar Filing: BGC Partners, Inc. - Form 424B3

embracing the opportunity, the self-interest of a Cantor Company or their respective representatives will be brought into conflict with our self-interest.

Corporate Governance and Other Matters

See our latest Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC, and any updates thereto contained in our subsequent Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and Current Reports on Form 8-K filed with the SEC, all of which we incorporate by reference herein.

Registration Rights

We entered into a registration rights agreement with Cantor, dated December 9, 1999, in connection with eSpeed's formation. We also assumed in connection with the merger the obligations of BGC Partners OldCo under its registration rights agreement with Cantor dated March 31, 2008. In connection with the issuance of the

Table of Contents

8.75% convertible notes to Cantor, we entered into a registration rights agreement with Cantor dated April 1, 2010 with respect to shares of our Class A common stock acquirable upon conversion of the notes. In addition, pursuant to the capped call transactions that we entered into in connection with the issuance of the 4.50% convertible notes, we have agreed to register under the Securities Act shares of our Class A common stock acquired by the counterparties to the capped call transactions for hedging purposes, if in the good faith reasonable judgment of such counterparties, based upon advice of legal counsel, such shares cannot be sold without registration under the Securities Act. For a description of the foregoing registration rights, see our latest Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC, and any updates thereto contained in our subsequent Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and Current Reports on Form 8-K filed with the SEC, all of which are incorporated by reference herein.

Transfer Agent and Registrar

The transfer agent and registrar for our Class A common stock is American Stock Transfer & Trust Company, LLC.

Table of Contents

DIVIDEND POLICY

Our board of directors has authorized a dividend policy which provides that we expect to pay not less than 75% of our post-tax distributable earnings per fully diluted share as cash dividends to our common stockholders, with the balance of such distributable earnings to be available to repurchase shares of our Class A common stock or purchase BGC Holdings limited partnership interests or other equity interests in our subsidiaries, including from Cantor, our executive officers, other employees, partners and others. Please see below for a detailed definition of post-tax distributable earnings per fully diluted share.

Our board of directors and our audit committee have authorized repurchases of shares of our Class A common stock and redemptions of BGC Holdings limited partnership interests or other equity interests in our subsidiaries, including those held by Cantor, our executive officers, other employees, partners and others. As of May 31, 2012, we had approximately \$50.8 million remaining under this authorization and may continue to actively make repurchases or redemptions, or cease to make such repurchases or redemptions, from time to time.

We expect to pay such dividends, if and when declared by our board of directors, on a quarterly basis. The dividend to our common stockholders is expected to be calculated based on post-tax distributable earnings allocated to BGC Partners, Inc. and generated over the fiscal quarter ending prior to the record date for the dividend. No assurance can be made, however, that a dividend will be paid each quarter.

The declaration, payment, timing and amount of any future dividends payable by us will be at the sole discretion of our board of directors. We are a holding company, with no direct operations, and therefore we are able to pay dividends only from our available cash on hand and funds received from distributions from BGC U.S. and BGC Global. Our ability to pay dividends may also be limited by regulatory considerations as well as by covenants contained in financing or other agreements. In addition, under Delaware law, dividends may be payable only out of surplus, which is our net assets minus our capital, or, if we have no surplus, out of our net profits for the fiscal year in which the dividend is declared and/or the preceding fiscal year. Accordingly, any unanticipated accounting, tax, regulatory or other charges against net income may adversely affect our ability to declare dividends. While we intend to declare and pay dividends quarterly, there can be no assurance that our board of directors will declare dividends at all or on a regular basis or that the amount of our dividends will not change.

Certain Definitions

Revenues for distributable earnings, pre-tax distributable earnings and post-tax distributable earnings are supplemental measures of operating performance that are used by our management to evaluate the financial performance of us and our subsidiaries. We believe that distributable earnings best reflects the operating earnings generated by us on a consolidated basis and are the earnings which management considers available for distribution to BGC Partners and its common stockholders, as well as to holders of BGC Holdings limited partnership interests, during any period.

As compared with income (loss) from operations before income taxes, net income (loss) for fully diluted shares, and fully diluted earnings (loss) per share, all prepared in accordance with GAAP, distributable earnings calculations primarily exclude certain non-cash compensation and other expenses which generally do not involve the receipt or outlay of cash by us, which do not dilute existing stockholders, and which do not have economic consequences, as described below. In addition, distributable earnings calculations exclude certain gains and charges that management believes do not best reflect our ordinary operating results.

Revenues for distributable earnings are defined as GAAP revenues excluding the impact of our non-cash earnings or losses related to our equity investments, such as in Aqua Securities, L.P. and ELX Futures, L.P., and its holding company general partner, ELX Futures Holdings LLC. Revenues for distributable earnings also

Table of Contents

include the collection of receivables which would have been recognized for GAAP other than for the effect of acquisition accounting.

Pre-tax distributable earnings are defined as GAAP income (loss) from operations before income taxes excluding items that are primarily non-cash, non-dilutive, and non-economic, such as:

Non-cash stock-based equity compensation charges for REUs granted or issued prior to the merger of BGC Partners OldCo with and into eSpeed, as well as post-merger non-cash, non-dilutive equity-based compensation related to partnership unit exchange or conversion;

Allocations of net income to founding/working partner and other units, including REUs, RPUs, PSUs and PSIs; and

Non-cash asset impairment charges, if any.

Distributable earnings calculations also exclude charges related to purchases, cancellations or redemptions of limited partnership interests and certain one-time or non-recurring items, if any.

Compensation and employee benefits expense for distributable earnings will also include broker commission payouts relating to the aforementioned collection of receivables.

Beginning with the first quarter of 2011, our definition of distributable earnings was revised to exclude certain gains and charges with respect to acquisitions, dispositions and resolutions of litigation. This change in the definition of distributable earnings is not reflected in, nor does it affect, our presentation of prior periods. Our management believes that excluding these gains and charges best reflects our operating performance.

Since distributable earnings are calculated on a pre-tax basis, management intends to also report post-tax distributable earnings and post-tax distributable earnings per fully diluted share :

Post-tax distributable earnings are defined as pre-tax distributable earnings adjusted to assume that all pre-tax distributable earnings were taxed at the same effective rate.

Post-tax distributable earnings per fully diluted share are defined as post-tax distributable earnings divided by the weighted-average number of fully diluted shares for the period.

Our distributable earnings per fully diluted share calculations assume either that:

The fully diluted share count includes the shares related to the dilutive instruments, such as the convertible notes, but excludes the associated interest expense, net of tax, when the impact would be dilutive, or

The fully diluted share count excludes the shares related to the dilutive instruments, but includes the associated interest expense, net of tax.

Each quarter, the dividend to common stockholders is expected to be determined by our board of directors with reference to post-tax distributable earnings per fully diluted share. In addition to the quarterly dividend to our common stockholders, we expect to pay a pro rata distribution of net income to BGC Holdings founding/working partner and other limited partnership units, including REUs, RPUs, PSUs and PSIs, and to Cantor for its noncontrolling interest. The amount of all of these payments is expected to be determined using the above definition of pre-tax distributable earnings per fully diluted share.

Edgar Filing: BGC Partners, Inc. - Form 424B3

Certain employees who are holders of RSUs are granted pro rata payments equivalent to the amount of dividends paid to common stockholders. Under GAAP, a portion of the dividend equivalents on RSUs is required to be taken as a compensation charge in the period paid. However, to the extent that they represent cash payments

Table of Contents

made from the prior period's distributable earnings, they do not dilute existing stockholders and are therefore excluded from the calculation of distributable earnings.

Distributable earnings is not meant to be an exact measure of cash generated by operations and available for distribution, nor should it be considered in isolation or as an alternative to cash flows from operations or GAAP net income (loss). We view distributable earnings as a metric that is not necessarily indicative of liquidity or the cash available to fund our operations.

Pre- and post-tax distributable earnings are not intended to replace the presentation of our GAAP financial results. However, our management believes that they help provide investors with a clearer understanding of our financial performance and offer useful information to both management and investors regarding certain financial and business trends related to our financial condition and results of operations. Management believes that distributable earnings and the GAAP measures of our financial performance should be considered together.

Table of Contents**PRICE RANGE OF CLASS A COMMON STOCK**

Our Class A common stock is traded on the Nasdaq Global Select Market under the symbol BGCP. There is no public trading market for our Class B common stock, which is held by Cantor and CFGM. The following table sets forth, for the fiscal quarters indicated, the high and low sales prices per share of our Class A common stock on the Nasdaq Global Select Market.

We paid quarterly dividends on our common stock of \$0.14 for each of the four quarters of 2010 and \$0.17 for each of the four quarters of 2011 and for the first quarter of 2012.

	High	Low
2012		
First Quarter	\$ 8.04	\$ 5.88
Second Quarter (through June 11, 2012)	\$ 7.56	\$ 5.73
2011		
First Quarter	\$ 10.07	\$ 7.72
Second Quarter	\$ 9.75	\$ 7.27
Third Quarter	\$ 8.58	\$ 5.88
Fourth Quarter	\$ 7.47	\$ 5.40
2010		
First Quarter	\$ 6.47	\$ 3.72
Second Quarter	\$ 6.97	\$ 5.05
Third Quarter	\$ 6.03	\$ 4.69
Fourth Quarter	\$ 8.76	\$ 5.95

On June 11, 2012, the closing sales price of our Class A common stock on the Nasdaq Global Select Market was \$6.09. As of June 11, 2012, there were 343 holders of record of our Class A common stock and two holders of record of our Class B common stock.

Table of Contents

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We may offer the debt securities included in this prospectus, including any shares of Class A common stock that may be issuable upon conversion or exchange of any such debt securities, by ourselves directly, to or through underwriters or dealers, through agents, or through a combination of any of these methods of sale. Any such underwriters, dealers or agents may include our affiliates. The details of any such offering will be set forth in the prospectus supplement relating to the offering.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

CF&Co, which is our broker-dealer affiliate, a wholly owned subsidiary of Cantor, and a member of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, Inc., which we refer to as FINRA, may participate in distributions of the debt securities included in this prospectus. Any offering of debt securities in which CF&Co participates will conform to the requirements set forth in Rule 5121 of the Conduct Rules of FINRA. CF&Co and its affiliates, including Cantor, have provided investment banking, financial advisory and other services to us and our affiliates in the past and are expected do so in the future. They receive customary fees and commissions for these services. In addition, they may also receive brokerage services and market data and analytics products from us and our affiliates.

In compliance with the guidelines of FINRA, the maximum commission or discount to be received by any FINRA member or independent broker dealer may not exceed 8% of the aggregate principal amount of securities offered pursuant to this prospectus. We anticipate, however, that the actual commission or discount to be received in any particular offering of securities will be significantly less than this amount.

LEGAL MATTERS

Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP, New York, New York has rendered an opinion to us regarding the validity of the debt securities included in this prospectus.

The validity of the shares of our Class A common stock that may be issuable upon conversion or exchange of any debt securities included in this prospectus has been passed upon for us by Stephen M. Merkel, our Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary. Mr. Merkel's address is c/o BGC Partners, Inc., 499 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10022. As of May 31, 2012, Mr. Merkel owned (i) 39,464 shares of Class A common stock held directly by Mr. Merkel, (ii) 300,000 shares of Class A common stock subject to options currently exercisable or exercisable within 60 days held directly by Mr. Merkel, (iii) 9,859 shares of Class A common stock held in Mr. Merkel's 401(k) account as of April 30, 2012, and (iv) 2,250 shares of Class A common stock beneficially owned by Mr. Merkel's spouse. Mr. Merkel is also the Executive Managing Director, General Counsel and Secretary of Cantor and CF&Co, a limited partner in Cantor, and the Vice President and Secretary of CFGM and has in the past and may in the future sell shares of Class A common stock and working partner units to us.

Any underwriters, dealers or agents will also be advised about the validity of the debt securities, any Class A common stock that may be issuable upon conversion or exchange of such debt securities, and other legal matters by their own counsel, which will be named in the applicable prospectus supplement.

EXPERTS

Ernst & Young LLP, our independent registered public accounting firm, has audited the consolidated financial statements and financial statement schedule of BGC Partners, Inc. included in our Annual Report on

Table of Contents

Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2011, and the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting of BGC Partners, Inc. as of December 31, 2011, as stated in their reports thereon, included therein, which are incorporated by reference in this prospectus. Such consolidated financial statements and financial statement schedule of BGC Partners, Inc. are incorporated by reference in reliance upon the report of such firm given upon their authority as experts in accounting and auditing.

Ernst & Young LLP, Grubb & Ellis Company's independent registered public accounting firm, has audited the consolidated financial statements of Grubb & Ellis Company as of December 31, 2011 and 2010, and for each of the three years in the period ended December 31, 2011, included in our Current Report on Form 8-K/A filed with the SEC on May 24, 2012, which is incorporated by reference in this prospectus. Such consolidated financial statements are incorporated by reference in reliance upon the report of such firm given upon their authority as experts in accounting and auditing.

Table of Contents

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We file annual, quarterly and current reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. You may read and copy any document we file at the SEC's Public Reference Room located at One Station Place, 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. You can also request copies of the documents, upon payment of a duplicating fee, by writing the Public Reference Section of the SEC. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for further information on the Public Reference Room. These filings are also available to the public from the SEC's website at www.sec.gov.

Our website address is www.bgcpartners.com. Through our website, we make available, free of charge, the following documents as soon as reasonably practicable after they are electronically filed with, or furnished to, the SEC: our Annual Reports on Form 10-K; our proxy statements for our annual and special stockholder meetings; our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q; our Current Reports on Form 8-K; Forms 3, 4 and 5 and Schedules 13D filed on behalf of Cantor, CFGM, our directors and our executive officers; and amendments to those documents. The information contained on, or that may be accessed through, our website is not part of, and is not incorporated into, this prospectus.

DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

The SEC allows us to incorporate by reference into this prospectus the documents that we file with the SEC, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to those documents. The information incorporated by reference is considered to be part of this prospectus. We incorporate by reference into this prospectus the following documents:

our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2011 filed on March 15, 2012;

our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended March 31, 2012 filed on May 8, 2012;

our Current Report on Form 8-K filed on February 15, 2012;

our Current Report on Form 8-K filed on February 21, 2012;

our Current Report on Form 8-K filed on February 24, 2012 (other than as indicated therein);

our Current Report on Form 8-K filed on February 29, 2012;

our Current Report on Form 8-K filed on March 28, 2012;

our Current Report on Form 8-K filed on April 3, 2012;

our Current Report on Form 8-K filed on April 19, 2012;

our Current Report on Form 8-K filed on May 3, 2012 (other than as indicated therein);

Edgar Filing: BGC Partners, Inc. - Form 424B3

our Current Report on Form 8-K/A filed on May 24, 2012;

our Registration Statement on Form 8-A for our Class A common stock filed on November 18, 1999;

our Amendment No. 1 to our Registration Statement on Form 8-A filed on March 7, 2001; and

all documents filed by us with the SEC pursuant to Section 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act (Commission File Number 0-28191) after (i) the date of filing of Amendment No. 1 to the registration statement and prior to the effectiveness of the registration statement and (ii) the date of this prospectus and before the completion of the offerings of the debt securities and any Class A common stock that may be issuable upon conversion or exchange of such debt securities in connection with this prospectus.

Table of Contents

Any statement contained in this prospectus, any prospectus supplement or a document incorporated by reference herein or therein shall be deemed to be modified or superseded to the extent that a statement contained herein, or in any prospectus supplement or any subsequently filed document that also is incorporated by reference herein or therein modifies or supersedes such statement. Any statement so modified or superseded shall not be deemed, except as so modified or superseded, to constitute a part of this prospectus or any prospectus supplement.

You may obtain copies of these documents, at no cost to you, from our website (www.bgcpartners.com), or by writing or telephoning us at the following address:

Investor Relations

BGC Partners, Inc.

499 Park Avenue

New York, New York 10022

(212) 610-2426

Table of Contents

BGC PARTNERS, INC.