

## In The News

# Munsch Hardt Adds Four Construction Law Laterals in Houston

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*Texas Lawyer*

Munsch Hardt Kopf & Harr has expanded its construction practice in Houston by hiring four lawyers from Houston-based Coats Rose, including shareholders Robert Hancock and Mason Hester.

Hester joined Munsch Hardt on Sept. 25. Associate Tiffany Harrod made the move in September, and Hancock joined in June along with associate Teia Kelly. The firm announced the hires on Monday.

Munsch Hardt has added a number of construction lawyers in Houston over the last two years, including shareholder Tom Barber, another former Coats Rose lawyer who joined Munsch Hardt in 2015 after a bout with cancer.

Hancock, who does construction litigation, said he moved to Dallas-based Munsch Hardt because of the firm's strong presence in the construction law market in Texas, particularly in Houston and Austin.

He said he previously worked with Barber at Coats Rose, and also with a group of litigators who joined Munsch Hardt in 2014 from Harrison Bettis McFarland.

"I have tremendous respect for the folks I worked with before, including Tom [Barber] and also including Ben Wheatley and Adam Richie up in our Austin office," Hancock said.

Hester said he joined Munsch because of the caliber of its construction attorneys, and also because of the "great family environment" at the firm and its range of practice areas. He said he and Wheatley, the managing shareholder in Austin, both were recently in the first class of lawyers to be board certified in Construction Law, a specialty first offered by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization in 2016. He said few firms in Texas have more than one certified construction lawyer.

Hancock said there's been a lot of movement in the construction bar in Texas in recent years, and some out-of-state firms are seeking lawyers in the practice area for new Texas offices. However, he said, he chose to move to a Texas firm because it works best for his clients.

Hancock and Hester declined to identify their clients, but Hester said his include a large municipality, a Fortune 500 company, and various contractors and subcontractors. Hancock said his clients include general contractors that do commercial work, and he also acts as outside general counsel and primary litigator in Texas for a large specialty contractor that does work in multiple states—primarily on the eastern seaboard.

Phil Appenzeller, chief executive officer of Munsch Hardt, said the lateral hires bring a lot of experience to the firm's construction practice, and that enables the firm to "reach new milestones for our construction team and clients."

When asked to comment on the departures, Richard Rose, managing shareholder of Coats Rose, said, "We wish them well in the next phase of their legal careers."

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