

DB-90 At Two Years

What 132 hearings on 80 cases tell us about Austin's density bonus experiment

Two years in, the Austin Development Watch database tracks **80 distinct DB-90 cases producing 132 Commission hearing appearances** at the Planning Commission and Zoning & Platting Commission — enough to describe what is actually happening with the framework, not what was promised, projected, or feared.

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Overview

Two years ago this month, Austin City Council passed the DB-90 density bonus framework. It was sold as the city's faster path to housing — a structured trade where developers get height and density in exchange for affordability commitments, with a streamlined entitlement process attached.

Two years in, the Austin Development Watch database has tracked **80 distinct DB-90 cases producing 132 hearing appearances** at Planning Commission and Zoning & Platting Commission — an average of **3.2 new cases per month** and **5.3 hearing appearances per month** across 25.0 months since DB-90 was adopted. That is a substantial body of work — enough to say what is actually happening with the framework, not what was promised, projected, or feared.

This special edition is what the data actually shows. No predictions, no policy advocacy, no characterizations of the people involved. Just the numbers, the patterns, and the specific cases that anchor the story.

***A note on counting.** Throughout this brief we distinguish **hearings** (Commission appearances; a single case can be heard multiple times) from **cases** (distinct case files). The 132/80 split is the same data, two denominators. Where this brief gives a single number, both are shown.*

Executive Summary

132 / 80

132 DB-90 hearing appearances on 80 distinct case files since DB-90 took effect in May 2024. 3.2 new cases per month; 5.3 hearings per month.

4 firms

Drenner Group (32 hearings on 21 cases, 24.2% of DB-90 hearings), **Thrower Design** (30 hearings on 13 cases, 22.7%), **Armbrust & Brown** (23 hearings on 16 cases, 17.4%) concentrated under Michael Whellan, and **DuBois Bryant & Campbell** (17 hearings on 11 cases, 12.9%) concentrated under David Hartman (including the 7-tract Airport & Koenig cluster).

42%

D9 (17 cases) and **D3** (17 cases) are tied as the highest-volume DB-90 districts — together 42.5% of all tracked DB-90 cases. **D1** (9 cases) is the third-most-active named district.

14 days

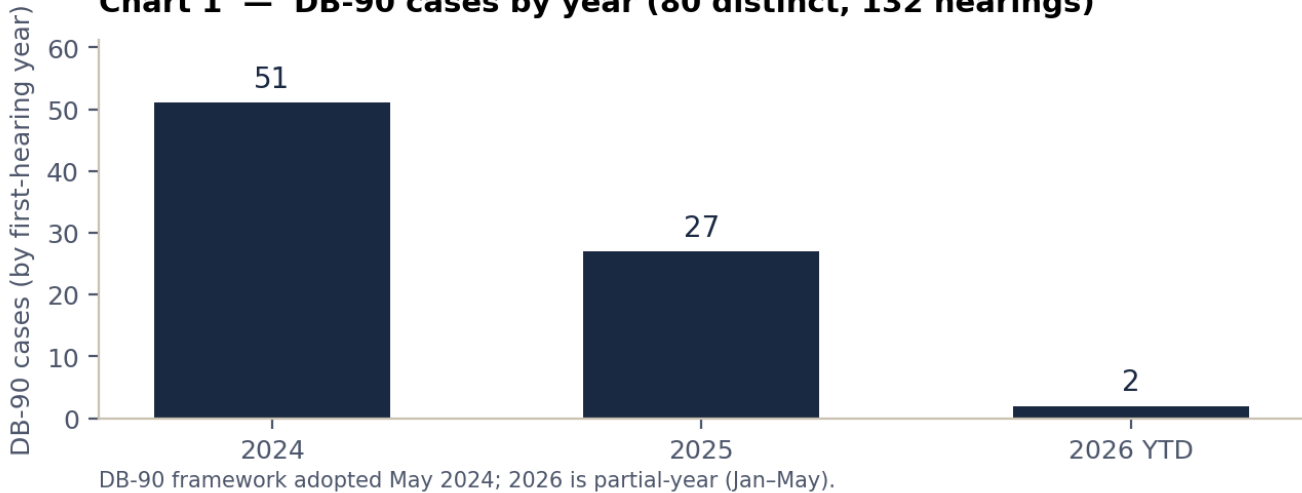
Multi-hearing median elapsed time from first to last Commission hearing for DB-90 cases (n=38 cases with at least two hearings). P90: 83 days. Max: 259 days. 42 of the 80 cases resolved on a single hearing.

2 denials

Out of 80 distinct DB-90 cases. Both denials carry DB-90 in their Frameworks tag in the Cases base. Denial rate: 1.5% of 132 hearings, 2.5% of 80 cases. DB-90 at Commission remains a high-approval framework; when DB-90 cases fail, they fail by attrition (withdrawal or indefinite postponement) far more often than by formal denial.

Section 1 How the pipeline filled

Chart 1 — DB-90 cases by year (80 distinct, 132 hearings)



DB-90-tagged cases first appear in the database in spring 2024, almost immediately after the framework was finalized. **51 distinct cases** were first heard in 2024 (May through December), **27 in 2025**, and **2 so far in 2026** (through the May cutoff of this edition). Through 2025, DB-90 cases became a routine feature of weekly Commission agendas.

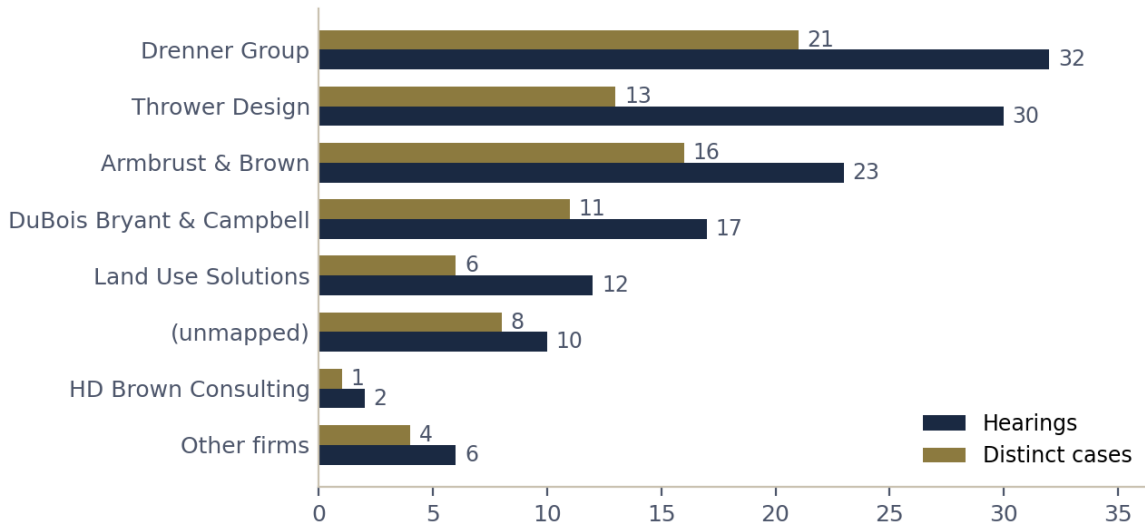
A few specific cases anchor the early adoption story:

- **5402 S. Congress Avenue** (Amanda Swor, Drenner Group) — among the earliest DB-90 cases in the database, recommended at Commission in April 2024. South Congress has remained an active DB-90 corridor.
- **University Park – North and University Park – South** (Michele Haussmann, Land Use Solutions) — two early-2024 DB-90 cases in the D9 / Old West Austin area. Both recommended on consent. Among the earliest signals that DB-90 would be deployed in established neighborhoods, not just greenfield corridors.
- **2700 S. Lamar DB-90 Rezoning** (Michael Whellan, Armbrust & Brown) — June 2024, recommended on consent. The S. Lamar corridor has since seen multiple DB-90 filings.

By the second half of 2024, DB-90 was no longer novel on Commission agendas. By 2025 it was foundational.

Section 2 Who is filing

Chart 2 — DB-90 by firm: hearings (navy) vs distinct cases (gold)



Four firms account for most DB-90 representation tracked in the database. The table below counts both **hearings** (Commission appearances) and **distinct cases** — the latter is the more conservative measure of how many separate development files each firm is moving. Drenner leads on both. Throwing Design ranks second on hearings, third on cases. Armbrust & Brown is third on hearings, second on cases. DBC is fourth on both, with its hearing-count concentrated on a single 7-tract cluster.

Firm	Lead attorney(s)	Hearings	Cases	Share (hrgs)	Share (cases)
Drenner Group	Leah Bojo, Amanda Swor (+ Nick Raffaele, Dave Anderson)	32	21	24.2%	26.2%
Thrower Design	Victoria Haase, Ron Thrower	30	13	22.7%	16.2%
Armbrust & Brown	Michael Whellan (Richard T. Suttle on 1 case)	23	16	17.4%	20.0%
DuBois Bryant & Campbell	David Hartman (incl. 7-tract Airport & Koenig cluster)	17	11	12.9%	13.8%
Land Use Solutions	Michele Haussmann	12	6	9.1%	7.5%
(unmapped)	—	10	8	7.6%	10.0%
HD Brown Consulting	Amanda Brown	2	1	1.5%	1.2%
Alice Glasco Consulting	Alice Glasco (independent)	2	1	1.5%	1.2%
Husch Blackwell	Nikelle Meade	2	1	1.5%	1.2%
City of Austin	—	1	1	0.8%	1.2%
Dunaway Associates	June Routh	1	1	0.8%	1.2%

Drenner Group — 32 hearings on 21 cases (24.2% of DB-90 hearings, 26.2% of cases)

Drenner's DB-90 pipeline is the largest by both measures. **Leah Bojo and Amanda Swor each carry meaningful DB-90 books**, with Bojo's portfolio including downtown-adjacent and East Riverside-area projects (1317 East Riverside Drive, S. Lamar Boulevard) and Swor's including South Congress and 38th Street activity. Nick Raffaele and Dave Anderson also appear on individual cases.

Thrower Design — 30 hearings on 13 cases (22.7% of DB-90 hearings)

Thrower Design's DB-90 book is concentrated under **Victoria Haase** (8 cases, including East Riverside / Cesar Chavez activity, the Red River file, and the May 2026 SE Airport / MLK rezoning) and **Ron Thrower** (5 cases, with Manor Road, Montopolis-Fairway, and AM Station). The firm's hearing-count is second only to Drenner's; the case-count ranks third behind Armbrust & Brown because Thrower files run more multi-hearing than A&B's.

Armbrust & Brown — concentrated under Michael Whellan, 23 hearings on 16 cases

Whellan's DB-90 book is unique in its **geographic spread**. He is active across D9, D7, D5, and D1 — meaning his cases span downtown, Burnet corridor, South Lamar, and East MLK. **34th and West Tracts 1-4** (D9), **9012 Research** (D4), **Thornton Road Multifamily** (D5), and **Burnet & 183 DB-90** (D7) are all in his book. His Q3 2025 D9 cluster — the four “34th and West” tracts heard together — is one of the more interesting recent DB-90 deployments because it deliberately divides a larger site into separate, parallel applications.

DuBois Bryant & Campbell — David Hartman, 17 hearings on 11 cases (including the 7-tract Airport & Koenig cluster)

Hartman's DB-90 book is unusual in its **concentration on a single site**. The **Airport & Koenig DB-90 cluster** — Tracts A, B, C, D, E, F, and G — represents seven distinct DB-90 applications for what is effectively one large mixed-use development. All seven recommended on consent at the March 25, 2025 Planning Commission meeting after a single postponement on March 11. That cluster alone accounts for 7 of Hartman's 11 DB-90 cases.

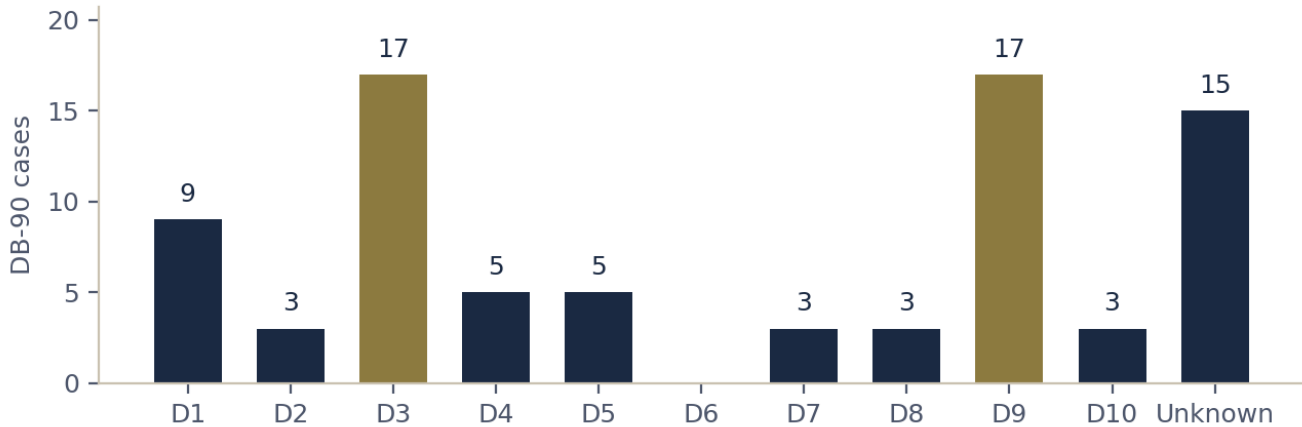
Splitting one development into multiple parallel DB-90 applications creates flexibility on later modifications and may simplify financing on individual tracts. The Airport & Koenig cluster is now a template other applicants may study.

Other named representation in the DB-90 pipeline

- **Michele Haussmann (Land Use Solutions)** — 6 DB-90 cases in D9, D5 (S. Lamar), and East Riverside. The *1700 South Lamar* case is still moving through its postponement cycle at the May 2026 cutoff.
- **Richard T. Suttle (Armbrust & Brown)** — 518 N. Pleasant Valley, recommended on consent December 2024.
- **Nikelle Meade (Husch Blackwell)** — one DB-90 case (4900 Gonzales) recommended in 2024.
- **Alice Glasco (independent)** — the long-running 7500 Burnet DB-90 case, which postponed in August 2024 and was withdrawn the same month.

Section 3 Where the cases sit

Chart 3 — DB-90 cases by Council District (n=80)



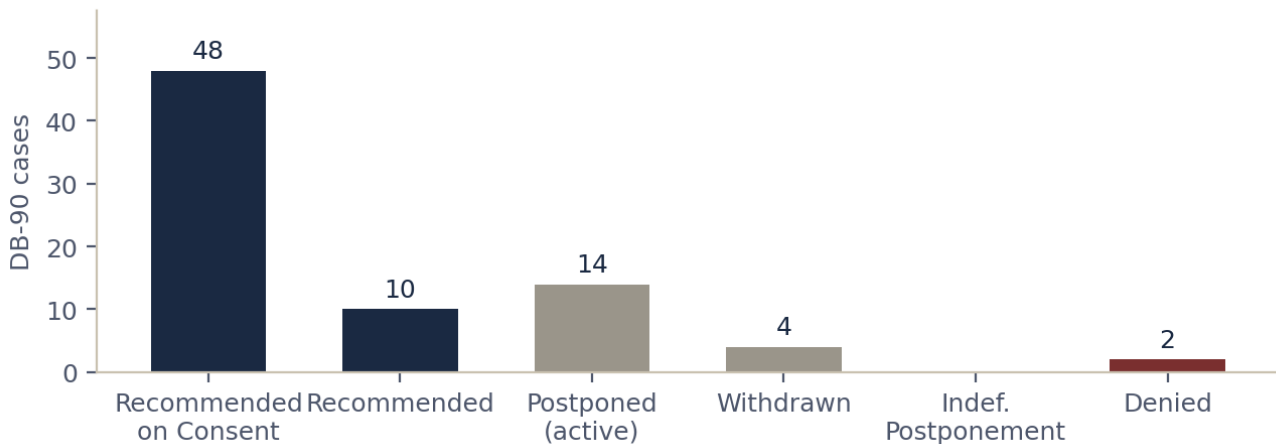
DB-90 activity is not evenly distributed across Austin. **D3 and D9 are tied as the highest-volume DB-90 districts** with 17 and 17 distinct cases respectively — together 34 of 80 cases (42.5%). **D1 is the third-most-active named district** with 9 cases. 15 cases carry no district tag in the source data.

- **D9 (Downtown, Old West Austin, North University, East Cesar Chavez)** — 17 cases. Includes the 34th and West tract series, downtown rezones, and the 1317 East Riverside file.
- **D3 (East Austin: East Cesar Chavez, MLK, Riverside, Pleasant Valley)** — 17 cases. Driven by the East Riverside corridor activity and the East MLK / Airport & Koenig rezoning activity.
- **D1 (East / Northeast: East MLK, Coronado Hills, FM 969)** — 9 cases. The 2600 E MLK Boulevard rezoning, FM 969, and Airport & Koenig adjacent files anchor the district.

The remaining districts have smaller footprints: **D4 (5), D5 (5), D7 (3), D10 (3)**. D2, D6, and D8 each carry only two or three DB-90 cases. The concentration matches the framework’s design — DB-90 height bonuses are most attractive where existing land economics already support density.

Section 4 How the cases resolve

Chart 4 — DB-90 outcome distribution (n=80 cases, last hearing action)



DB-90 outcomes lean strongly toward approval. The breakdown of the 80 distinct DB-90 cases by their last Commission action:

- **Recommended on Consent** — 48 of 80 cases (60.0%). The cleanest path: Commission consents to the package without individual debate.
- **Recommended** (with discussion or amendments) — 10 cases (12.5%). Commission flags specifics but ultimately recommends.
- **Postponed and still active** — 14 cases (17.5%) where the most recent Commission action was a postponement and no terminal disposition has been recorded. Cases like 1700 South Lamar and the Woodward Mixed Use Flats file sit here.
- **Withdrawn** — 4 cases (5.0%). Includes 2100 Polaris, the 1317 East Riverside file (withdrawn December 9, 2025 after going indefinite earlier in the year), 2201 Willow Creek Drive, and the 7500 Burnet file.
- **Indefinite Postponement** (without subsequent withdrawal) — 0 cases. The signal that a file has stalled without yet being closed out.
- **Denied** — 2 formal DB-90 denials, covered in detail in the next section. At 2.5% of cases (1.5% of hearings), denial is the rare exit, not the default.

The clear pattern: DB-90 at Commission is a high-approval framework. When DB-90 cases fail, they fail by attrition (withdrawal or indefinite postponement) more often than by formal denial.

The two DB-90 denials, verified at the case level

Both denials are tagged DB-90 in the Cases base — the Cases-base Frameworks field preserves multiple framework tags on a single hearing record. The council overlay reports only the primary framework per row, which is why earlier drafts of this brief that worked from the council CSV alone missed the DB-90 tag on the Red River file.

Case number	Name	Date	District	Agent / firm	Frameworks (Cases base)
C14-2024-0121	Red River (Denied 2/11)	2025-02-11	D9	Victoria Haase (Thrower Design)	CO Modification, DB-90
C14-2024-0040	5725 W. US Hwy 290 Eastbound	2024-05-28	D8	David Hartman (DuBois Bryant & Campbell)	DB-90

5725 W. US Hwy 290 Eastbound (C14-2024-0040) is the paired rezone file for a longer-running NPA (NPA-2023-0025.01) first heard in August 2023. The C14 rezone was filed under DB-90 once the framework was adopted in May 2024, and both the C14 and the NPA were denied on May 28, 2024. The State of Austin Q1 2026 brief tags this property under its NPA framework; this brief tags it DB-90 because of the rezone case. Both are correct: the same property carries paired filings with different framework tags.

Section 5 Velocity

DB-90 cases move materially faster through the Commission pipeline than non-DB-90 cases. Among the **38 DB-90 cases with at least two recorded hearings**, the median elapsed time from first hearing to last is **14 days**. P90 is 83 days; the maximum is 259 days (1317 East Riverside, which traversed the postponement / indefinite / withdrawal arc). The State of Austin Q1 2026 brief reports the same 14-day DB-90 multi-hearing median, against a 42-day market median across all frameworks.

42 of the 80 DB-90 cases (52.5%) resolved on a single hearing. That is itself a velocity finding: more than half of DB-90 cases never see a postponement at all.

Cohort	Multi-hearing median (days)
DB-90 (n=38)	14
Market — all frameworks (State of Austin Q1 2026)	42

Some of this difference is structural. DB-90 was designed for speed — the framework’s intent was to reduce friction on Council-ready entitlements that meet specific affordability and density criteria. Cases that qualify for DB-90 tend to be projects with already-aligned design and pre-negotiated community engagement, so they arrive at Commission in fewer revisions.

Some of the difference is selection. Projects choosing DB-90 over standard rezoning are typically larger, better-resourced, and represented by counsel with prior DB-90 experience. Those projects would likely move faster regardless of framework.

Section 6 The cases worth watching

A handful of DB-90 cases stand out for what their trajectory may indicate about the framework’s evolution:

1317 East Riverside Drive (C14-2024-0146)

Leah Bojo, Drenner Group · D9

The longest-running DB-90 file in the database: four Commission hearings across nine months, ending in withdrawal. The verified chronology from the Cases base: **2025-03-25 – Indefinite Postponement · 2025-09-23 – Postponed · 2025-10-28 – Postponed · 2025-12-09 – Withdrawn**. The case went indefinite at applicant request in March 2025, came back onto the calendar in September 2025 (the indefinite having ended), was postponed again in October, and was finally withdrawn on December 9, 2025. **The 259-day span makes this the longest DB-90 elapsed time in the corpus — the only DB-90 case to clear 200 days.** Whether this was development-economics-driven, design-driven, or community-opposition-driven is a question the public minutes do not answer.

Airport & Koenig DB-90 (Tracts A-G)

David Hartman, DuBois Bryant & Campbell · D9

The cluster filing — 7 parallel DB-90 applications on adjacent parcels, all heard at Commission on March 11, 2025 (postponed) and all recommended on consent two weeks later on March 25, 2025 — is the most distinctive deployment pattern we have tracked. The cluster alone accounts for 7 of DBC’s 11 DB-90 cases. If other applicants begin filing multi-tract clusters, the Commission agenda dynamics will shift.

34th and West Tracts 1, 2, 3, 4

Michael Whellan, Armbrust & Brown · D9

Four parallel DB-90 applications heard together at Commission. Approval would be a meaningful win for the framework in mature D9 neighborhoods; continued postponement would test the framework's durability against neighborhood resistance.

Red River (C14-2024-0121)

Victoria Haase, Thrower Design · D9 · Frameworks: CO Modification & DB-90

Denied February 11, 2025 after a single postponement. The Cases-base record carries both CO Modification and DB-90 framework tags on this file; the council overlay (which preserves only one framework per row) reports it as CO Modification, which is why earlier drafts of this brief mis-classified the denial as non-DB-90. Verified DB-90 denial.

5725 W. US Hwy 290 Eastbound (C14-2024-0040 / NPA-2023-0025.01)

David Hartman, DuBois Bryant & Campbell · D8 · C14 frameworks: DB-90; NPA frameworks: NPA

Denied at Commission May 28, 2024 — the same Commission session at which the paired NPA case (NPA-2023-0025.01, first heard August 2023) was also denied. The C14 rezone was filed under DB-90 once the framework was adopted; the NPA is the Future Land Use Map amendment. Verified DB-90 denial. The State of Austin Q1 2026 brief tags this property under its NPA framework because the NPA case is the longer-running record; both tags are correct for the paired filings.

SE Airport / MLK Rezoning (C14-2026-0002)

Victoria Haase, Thrower Design · D1

Recommended at Commission May 12, 2026 — one of the most recent DB-90 cases in the database. Whether it follows the typical fast-Council pattern or stalls will be informative.

Section 7 What the data does not say

A few important things this analysis does NOT claim:

- **Whether DB-90 is producing actual affordability outcomes.** The Commission process tracks entitlement approvals. What gets built, what rents are achieved, and what proportion of units actually lease at affordable rates are downstream questions outside our database.
 - **Whether DB-90 should be expanded, contracted, or replaced.** Policy questions are for the Council and the planning department. Our data describes activity; it does not prescribe policy.
 - **Why specific cases failed.** The minutes capture votes and dispositions, not the underlying reasons. We can describe the pattern of postponements-to-attribution; we cannot from the data alone say whether it reflects developer economics, neighborhood resistance, or city staff workload.
 - **Whether any individual firm is “better” at DB-90 work.** What we can describe are pipeline sizes, geographic distributions, and outcome rates. Causal claims about firm performance — that one firm's strategy works better than another's — require analysis the public record alone cannot fully support.
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Methodology

Analysis is based on the full Austin Development Watch tracked-cases database as of May 28, 2026 (4,558 hearing records). DB-90 cases are identified by the Frameworks field on each hearing row in the canonical Cases base, which preserves multi-framework tags such as *[CO Modification, DB-90]* that the downstream council overlay collapses to a single primary framework. The DB-90 universe used in this brief is **132 hearings on 80 distinct case files**, May 2024 through May 2026.

All conclusions are based on tracked case outcomes from publicly available city records. No interviews, internal firm sources, or confidential information were used.

Agent → firm consolidations follow the audited overlay used across ADW briefs: Suttle and Whellan map to Armbrust & Brown; Meade maps to Husch Blackwell; Hartman maps to DuBois Bryant & Campbell. The remaining attorneys are mapped via the council overlay's published agent-firm column.

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