The Times-Independent
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Craig Weston's Echo Canyon Legacy — buyer beware

Summary
Echo Canyon Legacy, a development project by Craig Weston, includes numerous exemptions in its warranty deeds, relieving developers of liability for various issues. These exemptions cover potential problems like loss of resale value, safety concerns, and environmental instability, highlighting the risks associated with building on river cobble fill near the Colorado River. The development's designation as a "preliminary municipality" raises concerns about local governance and community interests

My View October 22, 2025
By Jerry Shue

A recent Letter to the Editor in the Moab Times-Independent by Dave Closser, ("Kane Creek/Echo Canyon Development – lots for sale," The Times-Independent, Oct. 2) brought to light the many "Declarations" packed into Echo Canyon's warranty deeds.

Photo of caution tape courtesy of Tewy/Wikimedia Commons

Reading it brought to mind the developer Craig Weston's remarks in a past public statement — Wall Street Journal, March 24, 2025, "The Wild West Showdown Over Developing a Revered Utah Getaway."

"I want to make sure that when my kids come here, or my grandkids or their kids, they're like, 'Oh, my grandpa didn't screw this up,'" said Weston, 49, from the Salt Lake City area, eyeing his envisioned home sites from a bluff. "I do look at this as a legacy project."

When I read his comment my personal take on his word "legacy" was that he hopes to pass on to them millions of dollars from the profits of his scheme, but that's just my cynicism coming through.

So now we find that the warranty deeds issued for the Echo Canyon properties, formerly Kane Creek Preservation and Development, include "Declarations" galore exempting the developers from all sorts of responsibilities and liabilities. The entire blizzard of paperwork can be found at:

http://www.farcountry.org/articles.cfm?mode=detail&id=1740462061286

These exemptions include no liability on the part of the developers for loss of resale value, safety of the residents, insurability of property or environmental stability of the lots and structures or anything else that could go wrong in such an inappropriate location for development.

All these Echo Canyon homesites are to be built on eight to 10 feet of river cobble fill next to an unpredictable river that will be perpetually infiltrating and lubricating that fill. Their words: "Certain lots … may be more susceptible than others to incursions and damage by Property Waters," their euphemism for the Colorado River and groundwater.

In the midst of scores of pages of legalese they do admit the basic reality — "The Development and Improvements are located in a low-lying, riverfront area that is or may be subject to storms, high winds and tides, and periodic flooding. Any of these natural occurrences could result in substantial damage to or destruction of the Common Areas and all other Improvements within the Development, which could make all or portions of the Common Areas and Improvements temporarily or permanently unavailable for use by Owners or Occupants." Did anyone say, "buyer beware"?

They even find the need to mention their lack of responsibility if the development is subject to "partial condemnation" (perhaps some flooding?) or "completely condemned," (perhaps wiped out?) Condemned!? In a luxury development? Could that possibly happen if the up-to-10-inch river cobbles used for fill start to slide or settle, leaving luxury-caliber repairs. Or if the mighty Colorado simply takes back what is hers? If so, the residents "will have limited compensation."

Of course, it is a given — "each Owner and Occupant assumes the risk of any and all damage, destruction injury or death which may be caused by [the property] or the River." Buyer beware.

Meanwhile, their proposed benefit to the local housing stock is pretty well shot by the provision that any owner of these high-priced, likely second homes "may provide overnight occupancy accommodations" or provide rental management. Nothing new here. Moab doesn't need any more mostly unoccupied second homes. It needs affordable housing for people who live here year-round.

None of this addresses the implications of Echo Canyon's seemingly custom-made designation as a "preliminary municipality" (Utah Senate Bill 258), wherein the three principal investors assume the management of local government, infrastructure, zoning and ordinances, presumably to suit their own chosen interests, not the community's best interests. If they don't manage to find 100 occupants in six years the mess reverts to Grand County.

Craig Weston’s legacy dreams now seem more clearly about a quick pile of money for his heirs and less about a sustainable world-class luxury community. Is an attractive nuisance a legacy to strive for?

A truly legacy act on Weston’s part would be to turn the land over to The Nature Conservancy or some other entity that knows how to manage world-class land appropriately. His heirs could be proud of that.

Jerry Shue writes from Moab.