

City Hall Accused of Rigging Poll

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January 17, 2011

The  Moscow Times

Bloggers accused City Hall on Monday of rigging its own online [poll](#) on whether to replace historical buildings with modern replicas, pointing out that the survey was receiving an implausible few hundred votes a minute in favor of tearing down old Moscow.

The policy to replace old buildings instead of restoring them was favored by former Mayor Yury Luzhkov and lambasted by preservation activists, who said it amounted to the destruction of the city's historical center.

A poll initiated on City Hall's web site last week allows visitors to vote in favor of reconstruction, demolition or preservation of the city's architectural legacy.

The poll caught on with the blogosphere last week after prominent blogger and television host Alexander Arkhangelsky, a supporter of preservation group Arkhnadzor, urged people on his own blog to vote.

Some 5,700 people voted for preservation — and only 500 for reconstruction — between

Wednesday and Friday, blogger Arctic-lane [wrote](#) Monday.

But Valery Kichin, host of a show on state-controlled Rossia-Kultura radio, slammed Arkhangelsky's appeal, saying on his own blog Friday that it resulted in an "unashamed ballooning of votes" by bloggers.

The success of preservationists was ground to dust hours after Kichin's appeal, with 28,000 votes cast for reconstruction between late Friday and early Saturday, Arctic-lane wrote.

The poll allows to visitors to vote multiple times by simply reloading the web page.

"People could not have done it, even if they voted in an orderly manner," Arkhangelsky said by telephone Monday.

"Robots did it," he said, referring to a popular practice of rigging online polls by using computer programs that send out votes automatically at great speed.

"I can't see anyone else who might need this except City Hall," he said, adding that the poll's results might be used to justify further reconstruction, which is more lucrative and less time-consuming than preservation.

City Hall spokesman Yuri Drogalin refused to comment on the poll Monday.

The number of votes continued to grow by several hundred a minute early Monday, with most being in favor of reconstruction, but the gap grew smaller later in the day. By 6 p.m., 265,800 votes (just under 60 percent) were given for reconstruction and 165,300, or 37 percent, for preservation.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/01/17/city-hall-accused-of-rigging-poll-a4273>