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Moscow Expansion Focuses On Western Part of Region

By Bela Lyauv

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Mayor Sergei Sobyanin, left, and Moscow region Governor Boris Gromov conversing at an official meeting. They are overseeing the discussions on land allocation. **Denis Grishkin**

Land plots on the west side of the city are leading candidates to facilitate the expansion of Moscow.

During the St. Petersburg forum, Mayor Sergei Sobyanin and Moscow region Governor Boris Gromov agreed to create a working group to formulate a proposal on how to expand the city's boundaries, following an order from President Dmitry Medvedev.

The Moscow region government is allocating the space to situate the capital federal district, a member of the working group said. Gromov said eight locations are under consideration, including Rublyovo-Arkhangelskoye on the west side and Domodedovo in the south.

It is still not clear how many state agencies will move and how many people will work there —

which makes the process of selecting a site difficult, a source told Vedomosti. The Moscow region is mainly proposing that federal lands be used. But most plots are small — 200 to 300 hectares. The most developed proposals are for Skolkovo, Rublyovo-Arkhangelskoye and Domodedovo, the source said.

Sberbank head German Gref is the chief lobbyist for the Rublyovo-Arkhangelksoye plot, federal and local officials say. The Millionaires' City project — which consists of 2.7 million square meters of building space on 430 hectares of land, three kilometers from the Moscow Ring Road — was being developed by Nafta Moskva's Suleiman Kerimov. Then in 2008 Binbank co-owner Mikhail Shishkhanov bought the project using a 104 billion ruble ($3.7 billion) credit from Sberbank.

After the crisis the developer had to change the project's concept, and eventually Sberbank took control of Rublyovo-Arkhangelskoye. One of the officials in the working group said it is possible to extend the territory of the property to 700 hectares by purchasing nearby land currently in private hands, but he did not name the possible sellers. It was not possible to get a comment from Sberbank.

There are about 700 hectares of federal property at Skolkovo.

Vasily Anisimov is offering his Domodedovo territory, which totals 8,000 hectares, and Vadim Moskovich has property along the Kaluzhskoye Shosse that he is offering, regional officials said.

There is no final agreement about the expansion of the city using Moscow region land, said Gulnara Penkova, the mayor's press secretary, but the president's orders will be fulfilled.

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