

City to Pay \$1.4Bln for Luzhniki Makeover

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The Luzhniki complex glinting in the sun. The mayor's office wants to make it a center for sports and culture. **D. Grishkin**

City Hall plans to turn Luzhniki into a cultural center as well as a sports complex, with reconstruction in the run-up to the 2018 football World Cup estimated to cost 40 billion rubles (\$1.4 billion).

City Hall consolidated 75 percent plus one share in the Luzhniki complex, a mayor's official told Vedomosti. Buying up the rest of the shares is unnecessary, another source said. APS-tsentr — thought to be controlled by the complex's former general director, Vladimir Alyoshin — owns 24 percent.

The project's planning phase should be completed by Sept. 1. "Construction of a skating rink, reconstruction of the swimming pool, remodeling of main areas, and preparation for 2013 World Championships in Athletics are in the works," Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said.

Authorities are also reviewing plans to build a new Rossiya concert hall at Luzhniki to replace the one demolished in the Zaryadye district in 2006, several mayor's officials told Vedomosti. According to one of them, the building may go up next to a market that closed on July 1.

The Rossiya concert hall, with an area of about 30,000 square meters and able to seat an audience of 2,500, was part of the Rossiya Hotel in Zaryadye. It currently leases Luzhniki's Lyodovy Dvorets to hold concerts.

"We are considering construction of a comprehensive hall like Luzhniki's Druzhba," a mayor's official said. "It should be the largest movie theater and concert hall in Moscow," another official said.

If the hall is going to be the same size as the one planned in Zaryadye [about 55,000 square meters], then construction could cost more than \$200 million, said Konstantin Kovalev, managing partner at Blackwood.

Last week authorities also discussed reconstruction of the Luzhniki sports arena, where the opening match, semifinal and final of the 2018 football World Cup will take place. At a meeting with Sobyanin, it was reported that reconstruction of the stadium — Mosproyekt-4 — had been estimated at 40 billion rubles, said one of the meeting's participants.

"This estimate was made in 2008 to bid for the football World Cup, but no one will take it as a base. For that money, it's possible to build three stadiums," a mayor's official explained. According to him, the sports arena will first be prepared for the 2013 World Championships in Athletics, then changes for the football World Cup will be decided on.

"The only thing there that needs to be changed is the field, from synthetic to natural grass. Luzhniki is suitable in all other standards. It is the only five-star stadium in Russia. It is where the 2008 UEFA Cup and 2006 Champions League finals were held," said Vyacheslav Koloskov, a member of the executive committee of FIFA and UEFA.

Forty billion rubles is an unreal figure; changing the field would only cost about \$200,000, he added.

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