The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Greater Moscow to Include Suburban Pockets

By The Moscow Times

August 29, 2011

Moscow's territory will include land that is not directly adjacent to it — thousands of hectares belonging to VTB, Akron and David Yakobashvili & Partner.

The non-adjoining land comprises an enclave next to the Uspenskoye rural district between Novaya Riga and Uspenskoye Shosse, within the flood plain of the Moscow River. The idea to have the capital's territory include this portion "came from up top" and had been discussed from the moment the president announced the need to expand the capital, a City Hall official said. "There was an opportunity to include it, and it was not turned down," another said.

A portion of the land belongs to VTB, said several sources in the Mayor's Office. Consultants and an investor working in the area named two other owners: former Wimm-Bill-Dann shareholders and Vyacheslav Kantor's Akron.

A Moscow horse-breeding farm — an 87 percent stake in which was bought by Akron in the early 2000s when it possessed about 2,000 hectares near Rublyovo-Uspenskoye Shosse — is

the primary occupant of the land.

But in 2003, former workers of the farm sold their 800 hectares to Sergei Pugachyov's United Industrial Corporation. The corporation intended to create a recreational complex on 1 million square meters, including the elite settlement of Gribanovo "four kilometers from the prime minister's residence," which is still noted on the corporation's web site. For this, the company borrowed $2.4 billion from VTB with the land as collateral, and in 2009, as Pugachyov's empire crumbled, the land passed to the bank.

Plots belonging to VTB have been allocated to the new Moscow, but these are not the largest and best ones, said a source close to VTB Development. VTB's press service declined to comment.

The largest allocated plot belongs to Akron, said a real estate market consultant and a source close to Kantor. Vedomosti could not reach an Akron representative last week.

An eastern portion is part of the Gorki-2 agricultural firm, which together with other Moscow region land was sold in the mid-2000s to former Wimm-Bill-Dann shareholders David Yakobashvili and Gavriil Yushbayev. "The final decision on whether our land will be allocated has not been made. What will exactly go, I don't know," said a source close to one of the businessmen.

Most likely, allocation of the non-adjoining land was dictated by the desire to relocate government offices, said Maxim Leshchev, general director of Geo Development. A City Hall official confirmed that such an idea exists.

If the country's leadership wants to use existing buildings as permanent offices, this is a logical decision, said a source close to the presidential administration.

"It is possible to presume that the Kremlin will remain a ceremonial facility while the suburban headquarters will be the one that's actually used. It is important that the facility is formally located on the territory of the capital," the source said, adding that President Dmitry Medvedev tries to commute to the Kremlin as infrequently as possible.

Read the original Vedomosti article here.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/08/29/greater-moscow-to-include-suburban-pockets-a9209