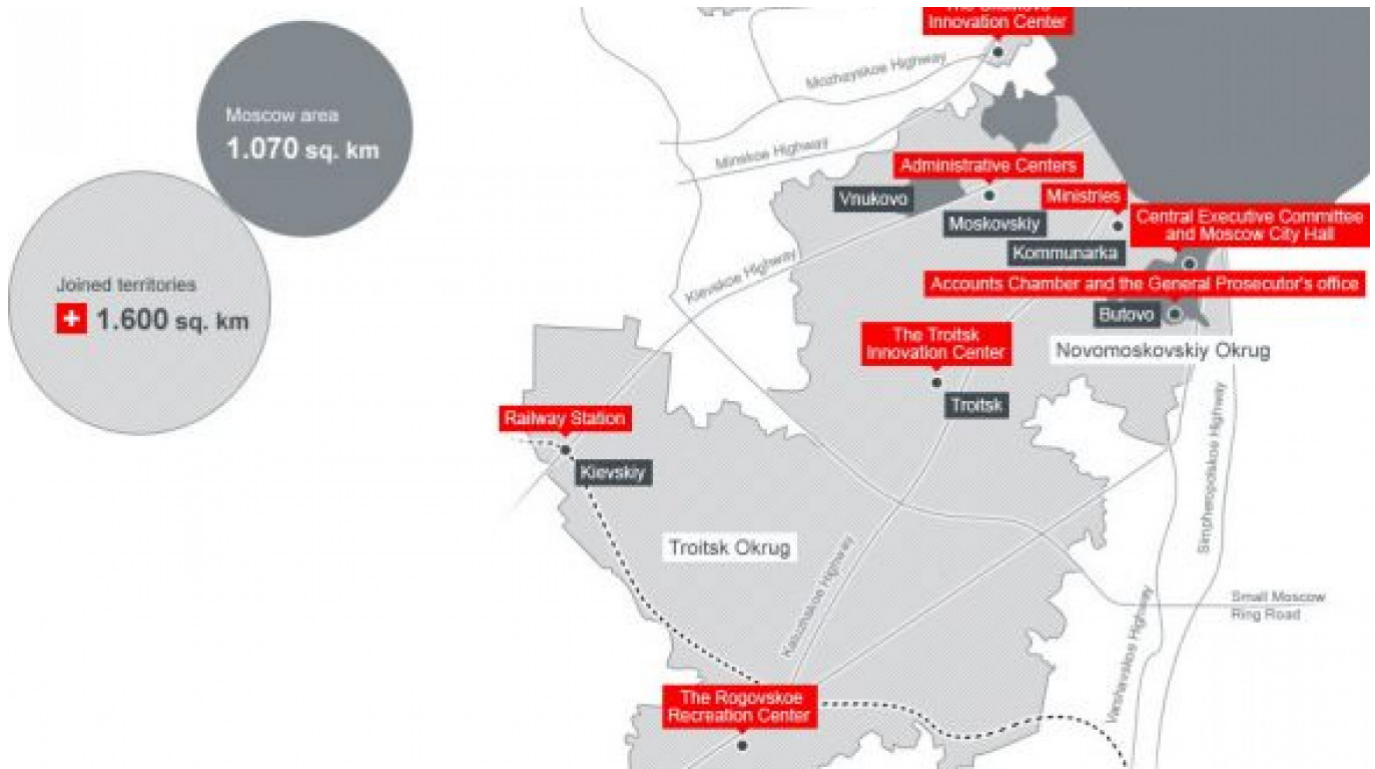


Putin Backs Moscow Expansion

By [Rachel Nielsen](#)

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Moscow officially grew by 148,000 hectares and gained hundreds of thousands of residents July 1.

More than a year after the federal government said it would extend Moscow's boundaries to the southwest — and more than a month after the capital's expansion took effect — President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday backed the initiative publicly for the first time.

"I want to say straight off that this project, which is brought about by necessity, is not someone's wish-list item or some PR stunt," Putin [said at a meeting](#) of top state officials at his Novo-Ogaryovo residence, in the Moscow region.

He spoke in the presence of Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who already have backed the plan, and Moscow region Governor Sergei Shoigu, who has repeatedly questioned it.

Medvedev proposed the expansion in June 2011 as a way to relieve the capital's snarled traffic and build a global financial hub.

The city officially added 148,000 hectares and hundreds of thousands of residents on July 1.

Nikolai Petrov, a political analyst with the Carnegie Moscow Center, said this was the first time he had heard Putin support the city's enlargement.

Putin likely put off comment until now because the plan didn't appeal to voters during his presidential campaign this winter and spring, Petrov said.

In addition, the delay gave political factions time to smooth out their differences and bureaucrats time to work out the details of land transfers and budget changes, Petrov said.

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