

Moscow Offers Contest to Promote Image

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You will probably never be the mayor of Moscow and may not even become the city's chief architect.

But before you despair on those two counts, consider that you can still make your mark on the city if you take up the government's offer to develop the Moscow logo and slogan.

The department of mass media and advertising has instituted an online contest for developing the Moscow brand as a way to draw in tourists and investors. It coincides with a tender for similar work targeted at branding professionals and worth up to 7.5 million rubles (\$239,043).

"Today, Moscow does not evoke only positive associations. There are a number of negative images, cliches and impressions, including those of Muscovites themselves," the note to the public contest says. "It is necessary to focus attention on the existing changes, share positive

emotions that are associated with them and broaden the impressions about Moscow."

According to the contest description, the brand is intended to convey that Moscow is a comfortable place to live, a worldwide economic center, a top-notch tourist destination and a city where people are "well-educated" and "charming."

The contest, which runs until Nov. 20, is split into three segments: idea and conceptualization, logo and slogan. Winning designs will be selected based on their originality, ability to be adapted into other languages and attractiveness to Russians and foreigners.

The public's input is expected to be an inspiration to the agency that wins the tender, but even professionals are doubtful about how these submissions will be used.

Vasily Dubeikovsky, head of CityBranding, criticized contest organizers for soliciting people's help without first deciding what the overall brand must be.

"The logo is only part of the brand," he said. "There is no central idea here to guide them, so basically it is work that won't be used."

The city's frugality has also drawn criticism from professionals. Whereas Samara paid its contest winners 300,000 rubles, Moscow's incentive for the same kind of work is a chance to receive a diploma signed by the department head and an invitation to an awards ceremony.

"There is no reward for this, and at the same time, the authors are required to give up the rights to their ideas," Dubeykovsky said.

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