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St. Petersburg Proposes Suburban Construction Ban

By The Moscow Times

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A group of St. Petersburg municipal officials has proposed a temporary ban on residential construction within 30 kilometers of the city in an effort to prevent urban sprawl and stimulate renovation in old industrial areas.

Proposing the bill last Friday at a meeting between city and regional leaders, deputy head of the city's construction committee, Vladimir Maran, said that though developers prefer cheap vacant plots right outside the city, there are many central areas in need of redevelopment.

The idea received support from local officials looking to halt rapid suburban housing construction, which has been a cause of massive traffic problems in other cities.

However, Maran noted that there is no legal precedent for banning construction in areas bordering the city and Leningrad region officials said they were not ready to support the proposal.

Up to now, the authorities have issued permits for the construction of 16 million square meters of housing in the area, Maran said.

Arseny Vasilyev, head of construction company Unisto Petrostal, which is a major employer in the area, was not pleased with the proposal. Banning construction around the city makes no sense both from the point of view of urban development and the development of the construction sector, he said.

If the authorities want to develop the city's industrial "gray belt," they should provide attractive conditions for investors, the businessman added.

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