

Yekaterinburg's Mayor Challenges World Cup Stadium Plans

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The Central Stadium in Yekaterinburg, slated for extensive renovation before the 2018 World Cup.

Vladimir Zadumin

YEKATERINBURG — One of the stadiums for the 2018 World Cup has become embroiled in a political tussle after Yekaterinburg's mayor demanded a dramatic rethink of the plans for his city's arena.

The stadium in Yekaterinburg is to be easternmost of the 12 host arenas for the World Cup and has long been at the center of controversy, especially since opposition candidate Yevgeny Roizman was elected mayor in September, beating an opponent from the ruling national United Russia party.

Roizman said Tuesday that he opposed a \$380 million plan to renovate the city's Central Stadium for the World Cup. "Obviously" a new arena should be built elsewhere because "it would be cheaper," he said

Roizman added he was preparing an alternative proposal and would take it to the regional governor, an appointee of President Vladimir Putin, in the near future.

The mayor spoke soon after the existing Central Stadium rebuild plan was approved by the governor's city planning commission Tuesday morning.

The commission said it had found a way to reconcile the rebuild with the stadium's historic monument status, something the project's contractor had warned in October could cost Yekaterinburg its host city status unless resolved soon.

The government-backed Russia 2018 organizing committee said in October there was no question of replacing Yekaterinburg as a host city, shortly after reported crisis talks on the issue with football's world governing body FIFA.

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