

# Investors Eye Butyrskaya Prison

By [The Moscow Times](#)

January 31, 2014



Butyrskaya jail came top with a potential sales cost of \$1,800 to \$2,300 per square meter. **Stanislav Kozlovskiy**

Both Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Felix Dzerzhinsky, founder of the Soviet secret police, spent time locked up in Moscow's Butyrskaya, but now investors want to get inside the notorious jail.

A group of investors are ready to build a new jail in exchange for Butyrskaya, which was founded in the late 18th century, said Mikhail Khubutin, a member of an investors' club that is interested in the project, Izvestia reported Thursday.

"Nobody said exactly how much money they are ready to put forward, but nearly everyone said that they were ready," said Khubutin, a spokesman for the Torgovy Dom Shater company, which estimated the project would cost 1 billion rubles (\$28.3 million).

"Cells built for 10 people have 40. I'm just sorry for them, as they are part of our society too. Their guilt is not yet proven and they can end up in a pre-trial detention center for petty

crimes," he said. "If there is no money in the budget to build a pre-trial detention center up to modern standards, then business can help."

Khubutin said all the companies in the club, which include developers like Guta Group, which owns Krasny Oktyabr, had large real estate portfolios.

The investors intend on turning the jail, which sits on prime real estate in central Moscow, into a "museum" or something else useful to the city, he said.

The Audit Chamber has previously proposed moving city prisons out of Moscow to redevelop their vast buildings into hotels, museums and office centers.

In 2012, Penny Lane Realty ranked the buildings of seven Moscow prisons according to estimates of how much money they could earn as properties after large-scale renovation. Butyrskaya came top with a potential sales cost of \$1,800 to \$2,300 per square meter. Butyrskaya has held both those who fought against the Tsarist regime and opponents of the Soviet regime.

Its fame was so great that when Harry Houdini came to Russia, one of his shows had him escape from the jail.

The jail already has a museum that displays old shackles used in the prison and items that prisoners have eaten, such as glass, in an attempt to be moved into the prison hospital.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/01/31/investors-eye-butyrskaya-prison-a31614>