

Architects Clash Over Vladimir Monument

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On Monday evening, Rustam Rakhmatullin, the coordinator of the social movement Archnadzor, brought together eminent architects and architecture experts to discuss the proposals to erect a 24-meter monument to Vladimir the Great in the capital. Also present was Yury Nikiforov, a representative of the Russian Society of War History, which has started an online survey asking Muscovites to choose the best location for the monument.

Concessions have been made since the initial proposal to place the monument on Vorobyovy Gory (Sparrow Hills), thus blocking the view of Moscow State University. Three locations are now in the running: on Lubyanskaya Ploshchad in front of the KGB building; in Zaryadye Park; and the current front-runner — on Borovitskaya Ploshchad, a stone's throw away from the Kremlin walls.

In a heated discussion that involved heckling, tantrums and shouting down, it was almost universally agreed that Borovitskaya Ploshchad is entirely unsuitable for the monument. In addition to obscuring the view of Dom Pashkova and potentially compromising the structural integrity of the shallow metro tunnels running underneath the square, a 24-meter structure would violate the laws safeguarding a UNESCO-approved protective belt around the Kremlin walls, within which nothing can be built that exceeds the height of any part of the Kremlin.

At the round-table discussion it was posited that further adjustments to the monument could still be made to reduce its height down to 12.5 meters if Borovitskaya Ploshchad was chosen. It was clear, however, that this change would not be enough to appease Moscow's architects, some of whom cast aspersions on the feasibility of the reduction, considering the monument is already in construction to the plans of the 330-ton original.

The online survey closes on Aug. 20, when detailed proposals regarding all three locations will be put to the Moscow City Duma for perusal. The monument, wherever its final location, will be open to the public, no doubt with great ceremony, on National Unity Day on Nov. 4.

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