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Russian State Duma Postpones Second Reading of Housing Demolition Bill

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Vyacheslav Volodin, chair of Russia's State Duma, has ordered the second reading of the bill outlining Moscow's controversial renovation program to be postponed. The City Hall's renovation program could see 8,000 five-story buildings across the Russian capital demolished.

The bill passed its first reading on April 20. The legislation allows Moscow authorities to declare entire districts "renovation zones," where any building could be torn down. The declared goal of the program, the mayoral office says, is to get rid of outdated Khrushchev-era buildings and offer their residents apartments in new, modern housing.

The controversial program has outraged some Muscovites and sparked small protests all over the city. Moscow authorities promised residents would get to vote on including the building they live in into the renovation program. The vote is scheduled to take place between May 15 and June 15, according to Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin.

“Until the poll among Muscovites is concluded and parliament hearings are carried out, it's unreasonable to make any decisions about the bill in the second reading,” the Duma spokespeople told the Novaya Gazeta newspaper on Wednesday.

Earlier this month Russian President Vladimir Putin urged lawmakers to make sure the bill does not violate the rights of residents and threatened not to sign it if it does.

On Tuesday, Moscow authorities revealed a preliminary list of buildings they plan to demolish. It included 4,500 buildings in 85 city districts, which is almost twice fewer than the initial plans.

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