

Russia Plans ‘World’s Biggest’ Orthodox Church – Reports

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An influential spiritual leader plans to build the world’s largest Orthodox Christian Church in central Russia, the Znak.com news website [reported](#) Monday.

Once completed, the 25-story structure on the site of a women’s monastery in the Sverdlovsk region will reportedly hold up to 37,000 worshippers.

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“The Saint Sophia Church will become an outpost and the largest Orthodox Church in the world,” Zhanna Ryabtseva, a senior regional manager of the pro-government All-Russia People’s Front movement, told Znak.com.

“Construction of the first stylobate will begin in 2020,” Ryabtseva, who Znak.com says is a

parishioner of the project's mastermind, said.

The mastermind is reportedly [Father Sergei](#), the secretive leader of the women's monastery where the church is set to be built and the confessor of several public figures, including former Crimean attorney general Natalya Poklonskaya.

When asked about the construction deadline, Ryabtseva told Znak.com: "It's all in God's hands."

Ryabtseva did not identify the church project's investors, instead calling them "the spiritual children of Father Sergei."

Investors from China plan to co-finance construction of the Saint Sophia Church, an unnamed businessman familiar with the project told Znak.com. Ryabtseva added that the new church plans to welcome a large number of Chinese parishioners.

A 3D model of the church showed an ornate three-tiered structure with a large golden dome towering over smaller domes. The lower temple fits 20,000 worshippers, according to the design, while 17,000 fit in the upper temple.

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At 77 meters, the new church will still be shorter than Romania's 120-meter People's Salvation Cathedral set to be [finished](#) by 2024.

The Yekaterinburg diocese said it was unaware of plans to build the church, the city's E1 news website [reported](#).

The outlined plans follow [protests](#) in Yekaterinburg against the construction of a new cathedral on public-park grounds last year.

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