

Downtown Clashes Over 'Risky' Hotel

October 25, 2010

The  **Moscow Times**

Residents of a central Moscow neighborhood blocked the ongoing construction of a seven-story hotel Monday, claiming the project — linked to the Oscar-winning film director Nikita Mikhalkov — is illegal and may destroy their own homes, a local activist said.

The conflict in Maly Kozikhinsky Pereulok, not far from the Pushkinskaya metro station, first flared Friday, when some 30 locals and 15 builders clashed over access to an onsite drill rig, which was eventually blocked by residents.

Neither side took any action over the weekend, but on Monday the residents broke the gates of the construction site and blocked the rig again, saying the builders were about to proceed with their work, said the activist, Yelena Tkach.

District authorities negotiated an end to the confrontation Monday and pledged to look into the incident, Tkach said.

Olga Veldina, a spokeswoman for Central Administrative District prefecture, confirmed to The Moscow Times that local authorities would check whether the construction project was legal.

An informational [billboard](#) on the construction site, a photo of which was posted online, identified the investor as RusStroiBalans and the developer as Studia Trite, a company owned by Mikhalkov. The industry news web site Hotelnews.ru [confirmed](#) Studia Trite's involvement in the project, initiated in 2006.

Studia Trite representatives were unavailable for comment Monday evening.

Tkach accused the developers of tricking city authorities into providing a construction license for the project.

Paperwork submitted to the city authorities said the project would not affect the neighboring 19th-century houses because their ceilings were made of concrete, but in fact the ceilings are made of wood, Tkach said.

The walls of other buildings in the area have already started to crack because of the construction work, she said, adding that the project, which she said includes a two-story underground garage, might destroy neighboring houses altogether.

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