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Media Statement

For Immediate Release

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City of Johannesburg Cracks Down on Illegal Property Operations During Joint Law Enforcement Operation

The City of Johannesburg conducted a joint law enforcement operation on Wednesday 21st January 2026, targeting two properties in Region E suspected of operating illegally and in contravention of municipal by-laws and national legislation.

The operation involved officials from multiple City departments, including Public Safety, Joburg Water, Development Planning, Social Development, and other law enforcement agencies.

Property 1: 419 Vine Avenue, Ferndale

The first property was allegedly being operated as a brothel, despite being authorised to function as a guest house. During the inspection, officials identified several by-law contraventions, including illegal water connections.

Water services were disconnected due to tampering with municipal infrastructure. The City has withdrawn the property's operating rights as a guest house, and the matter has been referred to the courts.

It was further established that women residing at the property were allegedly being booked through online platforms. One of the occupants requested assistance from the Department of Social Development to facilitate her return to the Eastern Cape, stating that she no longer wished to remain at the facility. Social Development intervened and provided the necessary support.

The alleged owner of the property was not present during the operation. He is reportedly a naturalised South African citizen.

Property 2: 471 West Avenue, Ferndale

The second property, owned by the same individual linked to Property 1, was found to be operating as a multiple dwelling without approved plans from the City's Development Planning Department.

The property was also found to be in arrears on rates and taxes. The owner has since signed an acknowledgement of debt. Water services were disconnected due to non-compliance.

Development Planning issued a fine, and further rates penalties will be imposed for illegal land use.

During the operation, a 14-year-old child was found on the premises and was immediately referred to the Department of Social Development for appropriate intervention and protection services.

It is alleged that occupants at the property pay a monthly rental fee of approximately R5 000.

City's Response

City Manager Dr Floyd Brink said the operation demonstrates the City's firm stance against illegal property use.

"The City of Johannesburg will not tolerate the illegal use of residential properties for unlawful activities. These operations are critical to restoring order, enforcing compliance with municipal by-laws, and ensuring the financial sustainability of the City. We will continue to act decisively against property owners who flout the law," said Dr Brink.

The City of Johannesburg remains committed to enforcing by-laws, ensuring lawful land use, protecting vulnerable persons, and safeguarding communities from illegal and unsafe activities.

Operations of this nature will continue as part of the City's ongoing efforts to restore order, promote compliance, and ensure safe and dignified living conditions for all residents.

Residents and businesses are encouraged to comply with municipal by-laws and report illegal activities through official City channels:

- **Anti-Fraud and Corruption Hotline:** 0800 025 87
- **Email:** Whistle@joburg.org.za
- **Walk-in:** 48 Ameshoff Street, SAPPI Building, Braamfontein
 - 6th Floor: Fraud, Corruption, Theft and Maladministration
 - 7th Floor: Property Hijacking and Compliance Investigation

Ends

Issued by the City of Johannesburg

For all media enquiries, email: mediaqueries@joburg.org.za