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The complexities of liquor licensing in South Africa and its impact on land use planning and urban management: the case of Johannesburg and Gauteng, using Yeoville Bellevue and Alexandra as a case study

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Abstract

South Africa's post-apartheid Constitution gives responsibility for liquor licensing to provinces, and municipal planning and control of liquor outlets to local authorities. It also calls for public participation in matters of government. This report unpacks the relationship between municipal planning and liquor regulation, and questions the rationale of the constitutional allocation of these functions. It also explores the extent to which citizens are able to influence decisions on the awarding of liquor licences and the management of liquor outlets. This is done using a combination of ethnographic reflection, desktop research, and an interview-based case study. The findings reveal general dissatisfaction with the current institutional arrangements and common cause that participatory processes are inadequate. The report recommends that section 156(4) of the Constitution be invoked to devolve liquor licensing from provinces to municipalities, and offers a neighbourhood-based solution to facilitate effective involvement of citizens in liquor-related decisions affecting their lives.