

**democratic resilience** project  
*towards stronger local  
democracy through a more  
informed and engaged citizenry*



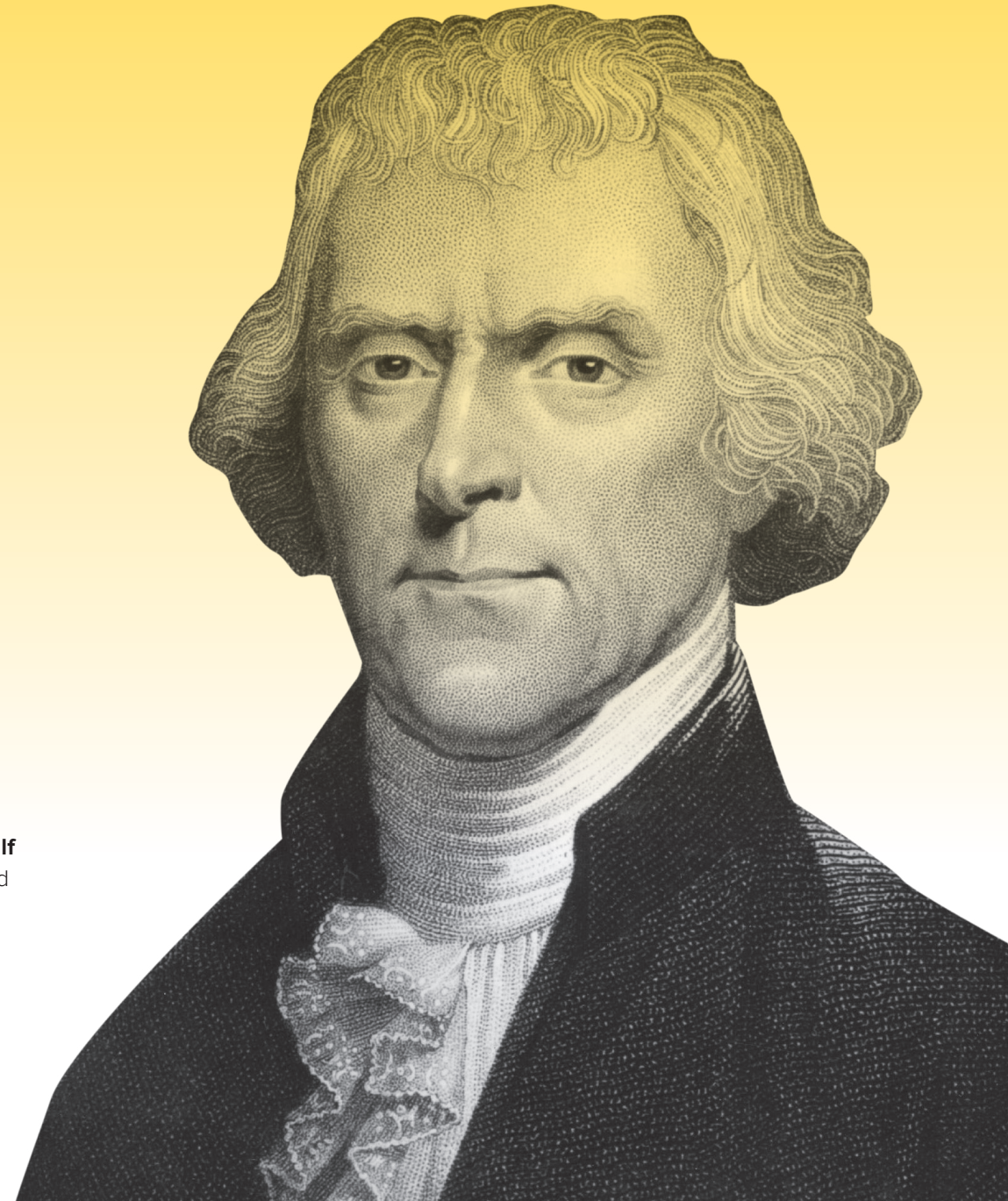
*enhancing community well-being  
through civic engagement*



“A properly functioning  
democracy depends on  
an informed electorate”

Thomas Jefferson

Under the Local Government Act 2002, the purpose of local government is  
(1) **to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf  
of, communities**; and (2) to promote the social, economic, environmental, and  
cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future.



## Context

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One of Inner-City Wellington's three strategic priorities for 2019-2022 is to "foster **local democracy** by representing and acting as an advocate for the interests of the inner-city residential community". It is also committed to the principle of "think global, act local" and to that end this priority supports the **United Nations Democracy and Civil Society** imperative that calls for greater government transparency and accountability as well as more participative and inclusive decision-making. The project focuses on this imperative.

## Position Statement

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Inner-City Wellington affirms (1) that a successful and stable democracy depends on the presence of a strong and freely operating civil society in which government and civil society work together for common goals for a better future; (2) that civil society helps keep government accountable particularly around issues of Human Rights; and (3) that public authorities should encourage civil society's participation in the democratic process and seek to strengthen their voice and their capacity to interact with all levels of government.

## Democratic Resilience

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The **United Nations** defines democracy as a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives.

Democracy is as much a process as a goal, and only with the full participation of and support by **government** and **civil society** can the ideal of democracy be made into a reality to be enjoyed by everyone, everywhere.

In 2007 the UN General Assembly proclaimed 15 September the **International Day of Democracy** to provide the opportunity to review the state of democracy in the world.



**International Day of Democracy**  
15 September

A **resilient democracy** is representative, participative, transparent, non-corrupt, civil and inclusive to and tolerant of a variety of ideas and ideologies, socio-demographic groups and a myriad of other forms of human difference. To function well, such a democracy also requires a robust and independent media and a high proportion of population with core shared democratic values and norms, some created via formal institutions, and others by informal social processes.

*Dr Simon Chapple, "Building Democratic Resilience", SSANSE Policy Brief, 28 September 2018, p.2.*

## democratic resilience project

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Within a local context the project seeks to promote three key engagement-focused initiatives. ICW will develop an **advocacy strategy** with the community designed to encourage the adoption of these initiatives by the local authority. The initiatives are:

1. The development of a community-centred **civics education** programme to include the creation of a **Civic Charter**.
2. The establishment of a **community engagement** initiative to include an expanded YouTube channel with strong community participation.
3. The commitment to greater resourcing, recognition and support for ward-based **community boards/committees**, suburban-based **progressive associations** and local **citizens assemblies** given their important place in the democratic framework.

The **democratic resilience project** is a local response to the decline in civic engagement as citizens turn away from the mainstream political process. This is reflected in lower voter turnout and a decline in the levels of membership and activism in suburban-based progressive associations. The project seeks to promote awareness and action within the local authority of their need to better serve the well-being of the people by strengthening the democratic process through more effective, transparent and accountable community engagement.

*listening to and working with our community*



[www.innercitywellington.nz](http://www.innercitywellington.nz)