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I'm happily addicted to audiobooks. Anyone from Los Angeles really should be, because getting the best ones means that a traffic jam isn't a waste of time: it's just an opportunity to read a few more chapters! And even those with short commutes could profitably make their way through lots of good books if they spend 20-30 minutes exercising or working out.

So I was delighted and surprised to see [the release, on the occasion of its 50th anniversary](#), Jane Jacobs' classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, the most significant book in the history of urban planning. Jacobs might be the mother of New Urbanism, but more importantly, she enabled thousands to see what might be called the ecology of cities: how the interaction of people and spaces creates (or all too often destroys) communities.

Even [Ed Glaeser](#), who [has little use for theories not his own](#), conceded Jacobs' importance when, in his recent book ([also available on audio](#)), he said that "not all of Jacobs' theories have proved correct." Very true (and one might say the same thing of Ed Glaeser's theories).

In any event, few books are still in print half a century after their original publication, and in Jacobs' case, there's a good reason why. Now, you have no excuse not to read it, because you can listen to it: it won't add an inch to your "books to read" pile! So go download it.