

# for THE LOVE of CITIES

THE LOVE AFFAIR BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THEIR PLACES

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## Intro

Collectively we have been having conversations about how to make cities more livable for many years now. In pursuit of livability, we routinely invoke the importance of a better built environment, more cultural amenities, increased economic opportunity, and preservation of the natural ecosystem. Livable is good—it's a fine aspiration that we have yet to achieve on any large scale. But I think we can do better.

Instead of merely livable, I think we need to start thinking about how we make our cities more lovable. I don't mean this in a "kum bay yah" kind of way, nor am I suggesting it's as simple as "let's all just get along." Rather, I'm advocating for the importance of deepening the relationships that we have with our cities and that our cities have with us. When we love something, we cherish it; we protect it; we do extraordinary things for it. When we are loved, we flourish as people and are enabled to achieve great things. This mutual love affair between people and their place is one of the most powerful influences in our lives, yet we rarely think of it in terms of a relationship. I believe that needs to change.

If cities begin thinking of themselves as engaged in a relationship with their citizens, and if we as citizens begin

to consider our emotional connections with our places, we open up new possibilities in community, social and economic development by including the most powerful of motivators—the human heart—in our toolkit of city-making. This book is an effort to wrap my head around what it means to have a relationship with a place, why it matters, how such a relationship grows, how it can die, and how to better understand it. It is about understanding those rare individuals who are “in love” with a place and how they shape those places by the expression of that love.

What follows here is about renewing our love affair with our places and the incredible things that can happen when more of us fall in love with our cities. I have seen what happens when people find that emotional connection to their city and the impact on their place and on them is amazing. It is my hope that the stories and examples here inspire you to a better understanding of the relationship you have with your place. It is my hope that the official leadership of cities add “love” to their vocabulary and their repertoire of development tools and we bring the creativity, innovation and good will of our citizenry into a joint process of city building.