

served as a catalyst for high-rise office space and increased real estate values. Indeed, the potential role of Times Square as an office location is highlighted by the recent completion of a number of major office skyscrapers in the immediate Times Square bow-tie, all with 'respectable' retail and entertainment uses at ground-floor level (Figure 9.1).

As a result of the real and perceived decline and degeneration of the area, in 1976 the 42nd Street Development Corporation was formed, a non-profit public-private partnership aimed at promoting economic development in the Times Square district. In 1992 this partnership took a more structured form, with the foundation of the Times Square BID, an important step in facilitating the private production and management of the district. The jurisdiction of the Times Square BID (renamed Times Square Alliance in 2003) now stretches from 40th to 53rd Street. The BID board members consist of 23 property owners, 13 commercial tenants, 3 residential tenants, 4 New York City government representatives, and 2 'community boards', in addition to 14 administrative staff (Times Square BID 2001). The Times Square BID enables over 400 commercial property owners and about 5000 businesses to pay into an annual fund of around \$6m. This fund has been used to finance private sanitation workers, increased security, a visitor information centre, social service providers, and advertisement campaigns promoting the area (Times Square BID 2000). This means that much of the control, management and design of a world-famous public space has been handed over to private interests.

RE-IMAGING THE PLACE

Whether the emphasis is on the clean-up initiatives that have characterised most of the BID's work, or on the corporate appropriation of Times Square, a key part of the story centres on image management as integral to the management of the space itself. This relates to the specific history of Times Square and its perceived problems (see Chapter 2), but it is also part of a more widespread process of place marketing which has characterised the economic development strategies of urban locations in a globalised economy. Zukin refers to this process as the creation of an 'abstract symbolic economy devised by place entrepreneurs' (Zukin 1995: 7).

In the case of Times Square, place making was not about creating an image where none existed. The iconic character of the location meant that there were already many layers of historical symbolism as over the one hundred years of its history the square has come to symbolise different forms of emotional attachments between citizen and civic space. This is nicely captured by Berman's (1999) phasing of the perceptions of Times Square in the American mind, from the period 1900-1945 when the Square and its large signs and civic gatherings symbolised American



9.1 Times Square study area