

concerts by international celebrities and with its Christmas spectacular. The hall spurred development. Rockefeller Center was completed in the 1960s with the erection of the buildings along Sixth Avenue but adaptations to the scheme continue.

The centrepiece of the public space is a sunken plaza backed by a statue (Prometheus by Paul Manship, 1934; see Figures 7.12 and 7.13) and surrounded now by flagpoles carrying the flags of the members of the United Nations. The plaza is reached from Fifth Avenue by a walkway with well-maintained central planting boxes. There were a number of thoughts about what the plaza should be – a forecourt for the Opera House, a promenade lined with trees, and a raised forum surrounded by shopping – before it took its final basement level form. It like many sunken plazas, was lifeless unable to retain the retail uses around it until a skating rink was introduced during the winter months. Made possible by developments in refrigeration

technology, it was a last-ditch experiment to get some life into the space. It is now a major attraction not only for skaters but also for spectators. It is surrounded at the basement level by restaurants and a lively if rather dreary shopping concourse that links the development to New York's subway system (see Figure 7.14).

The key building of the project is the RCA building. Its shape was dictated by Todd's assessment that all useable space had to be within 30 feet (9 metres) of windows to be rentable in a time of economic depression. Such a slab building had precedents in Frank Lloyd Wright's San Francisco Press building and in 1920s design explorations of architects including Marcel Breuer, Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier. Raymond Hood gave the building its poetic character through a series of setbacks – the first at 100 feet to comply with zoning codes created to ensure some sunlight at ground level. The other setbacks were due to Hood's desire to have all



**Figure 7.12** The view towards the Plaza from Fifth Avenue in 1993.