

The major products of the group's efforts were the creation of a series of 'special districts' in the city and the elaboration of the incentive zoning codes developed in 1961. The special districts included the Theater District, the Lincoln Square Special Zoning District, the Fifth Avenue District, the Greenwich Street Special District in Lower Manhattan, and the Lower Manhattan Districts of Battery Park City (see Chapter 8) and Manhattan Landing.

The 1961 zoning regulation allowed up to 20% more floor area than the codes allowed if an approved plaza was included in the design of an office or residential building. It was based on the popular myth that any open space in a city is a good thing. This thought was reflected in contemporary Modernist urban design paradigms. The

popularity of the new regulation with property developers led to less than desirable outcomes. Buildings became isolated towers surrounded by unconnected and largely purposeless open spaces unrelated to street fronts or sun angles (e.g. on Sixth Avenue; see Figure 9.1; see Kayden, 2000 for other examples). The continuity of the street as the basis of the life of the city was lost. The lesson learned was that the design of elements of the public realm of cities has to be conceived within a larger urban design vision and plan. The special district legislation was a response.

The special districts were established from 1967 onwards. The Theater District was the first. It extended from Sixth to Eighth Avenue east to west and from 40th Street to 57th Street south to north (see Figure 9.2). Faced



**Figure 9.1** Discontinuous plazas on Sixth Avenue, New York in 1993.