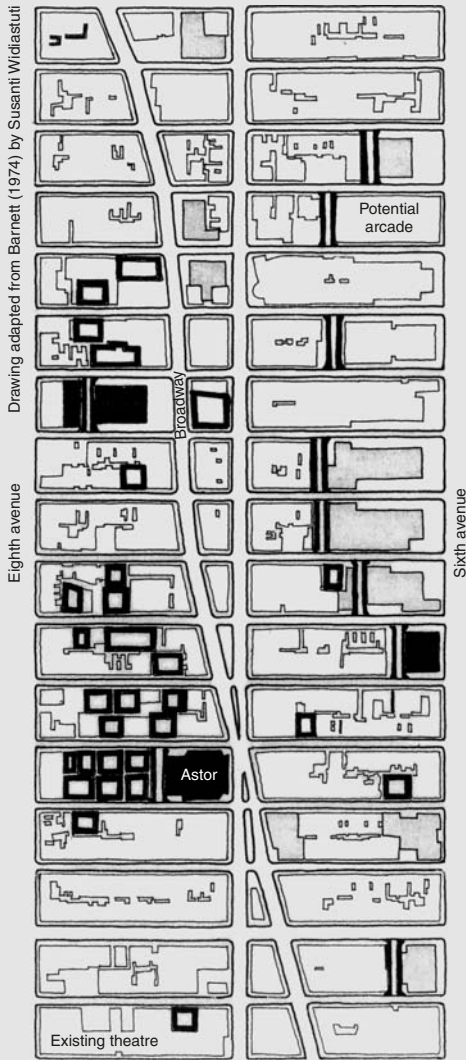


with a booming market for commercial office space, traditional legitimate theatres were not an attractive financial investment for developers nor were existing theatres generating enough return on capital invested to warrant their retention in the face of potential profits from the investment in office

space. Yet, what would New York be without Broadway and its theatres as an attraction? The Urban Design Group set about the task of devising mechanisms to keep the character of the area based on the assumption that it was in everybody's interest to have theatres in the district. The means had to be found to keep them and/or build them when it was in no investor's direct financial interest to do so.

The Group developed a modified incentive zoning method. It is a simple mechanism but involved many debates before it was established. The legislation had to be passed by the Planning Commission and the city's Board of Estimates. Rather than being a blanket citywide policy, the incentives were tailored made for each district. In the case of the Theater District the objective was to make an investment in a theatre commercially viable for property developers. As in the 1961 legislation, a 20% floor area bonus was offered to a property developer in exchange for building a theatre within a new building (see Figure 9.3). In this way the arts would be indirectly subsidized by the private sector. The test case was the old Astor Hotel site. Mayor Lindsay himself was directly involved in the negotiations with the property developer and the success of the process was largely due to his personal intervention. A new theatre was built. Others followed.

Each of New York's planning districts served a different purpose and thus had different regulations and incentives. Even if somewhat unkempt, Fifth Avenue is one of the great shopping streets of the world. The goal of planning for this district was to have a lively environment around the clock and to protect the profitability of the large department stores located along Fifth Avenue. The strategic location of these stores made the smaller shopfront stores selling a broad mix of retail goods economically



**Figure 9.2** The Theater District, New York established in 1962. (New theatres are solid black)