

Hello,

My name is Sasha Miguel Dyck, and I am a resident of Park Extension. I fell in love with the neighbourhood since the day I moved in five years ago, and have been active in various neighbourhood organizations ever since. My neighbours and I saw that there was a need in the neighbourhood for a cultural space offering healthy and affordable food, so we opened *Café l'Artère*, a non-profit cooperative arts café on Park Avenue. We saw that rising rents and property speculation were driving our less wealthy neighbours away, so we set up a housing cooperative, called *Port d'Attache*, that is currently working to acquire a building that was evacuated for public health reasons. I am on the board of the Park Extension History Society (as well as their webmaster) and lead walking tours of the neighbourhood, to help residents and visitors alike to learn and share the rich stories that abound in Park Extension, and I am also on the board of the *Ressource Action-Alimentation de Parc-Extension*, a food security non-profit that operates a thrift store and emergency food pantry. I am the citizen representative on several other committees that deal with active transportation, housing and security in the neighbourhood. Lastly, the changes coming to the neighbourhood prompted me and several other residents to found the *Coalition Marconi-Beaumont* to address the development of the district between Park Ex, Villeray and Petite-Patrie, and later to co-found the *Opération Avenue du Parc* citizen urban planning workshop to specifically look at the stretch of Park Avenue from Van Horne to Parc metro.

As you can tell, these have been a busy couple of years for me, but they have also been very rewarding. There are so many good things happening in Park Extension, and the neighbourhood has such a vitality, sense of pride and resilience, that it is hard to get too discouraged about the occasional setbacks. The PDUÉS plan has several good ideas for the neighbourhood, but some of its ideas need further refining for it to be truly helpful. I trust that with your help, it can be made into an instrument to truly serve the needs of Park Extension.

In this statement I will discuss the ideas I find positive from the PDUÉS, those that are less so, and then list in order the recommendations that I would bring to bear upon it. Several of the groups in which I am involved are also presenting statements that cover similar ground but from a more technical and academic perspective, so I will present my remarks in an informal style that speaks from my experience as a resident of the neighbourhood.

Positive aspects

Green spaces on Park Avenue: It pleases me greatly to see that the two loops off Park Avenue, one at the corner with Jean-Talon and the other at the corner with Beaumont, are seriously being considered as potential sites for green spaces. The current 20 or so parking places that currently occupy each loop do not seem as helpful to me as the spaces for resting, eating, and socializing that these parks would represent. The workers at the sewing machines in the Samuelsohn suit factory at 8930 Park Avenue would love to have a place to rest during their breaks – a participant of a walking tour I gave recently mentioned that she works there and has to eat lunch at her machine, as they do not even have a break room. On the other end, the building at 7101 Park Avenue is being

completely renovated to welcome several thousand new students in the faculty of Public Health, who will surely also want a place to sit, eat and discuss outside. Both spaces could include grass, trees, picnic tables, parking for BIXI bicycles and shrubbery. Even public art could be displayed there.

Negotiated understandings with private land owners: I was also pleased to see that the borough was open to signing agreements with owners of private lots, notably alongside the CP tracks below Jean-Talon (west of Marconi street), to allow access to the public. This will not be an easy process, but it demonstrates an imagination and a willingness to think outside the box that is commendable. The proposed food stalls, street furniture and public places will enhance what was otherwise a dirty and dark sector, while expanding the bicycle and pedestrian mobility options in an area that can be difficult to navigate.

Improved access to Jarry Park from Jean-Talon: In a similar vein as the previous proposal, the idea of working with property owners to create safe pedestrian accesses from Jean-Talon north to Jarry Park along Marconi and St-Urbain streets is a creative and good one. The area is not amenable to foot traffic, and gets quite full of confused and upset tennis lovers during the annual Canadian Open in Jarry Park. Of course, these agreements will take time and effort (and possibly funds) to negotiate, but I truly hope that the borough will follow-through on this excellent idea.

Protection of employment zones: As you know, the area covered by the PDUÉS used to be primarily an industrial one, with some housing for the factory's employees. In the last 20 years the decline of the domestic textile and clothing industry has left many factories empty in the area, and haphazard zoning changes have allowed the conversion of huge factories into hundreds of small condo units. The factories that are left often move because of conflict with the new residents, or because an offer was made on their property that was too good to refuse. In this regard Montreal is about twenty years behind post-industrial European cities, where any heavy industry that remains has moved far from the city centre. Unfortunately, by doing nothing to retain centres of employment within the metropolitan community and allowing them instead to be turned into luxury housing, Montreal runs the same risk Paris did of creating a central city that is devoid of industry and of its workers. This creates dead cities where no one but the rich can afford to live, and where there is little diversity in economic activity. In the PDUÉS zone, an example of this tendency can be seen with the large printing shop at 65 de Castelnau: the Transcontinental printing corporation is in the process of selling it to a high-end condo developer and has already moved all its printing activities to Ville St-Laurent. For these reasons, the zoning restrictions proposed in the PDUÉS are quite welcome. They will allow at least some of the industrial activity to remain in the sector, even if the housing stock around them is inaccessible to its employees.

Less than positive aspects

Automobile link between Ogilvy and de Castelnau: Everybody in Park Ex would like easier access to Jarry Park, and the people living and working in the de Castelnau area would also love easier access to Parc metro (I knew one couple living in the condos on Faillon street who used to cut holes in the fence to do their weekly shopping at Loblaw's). There is consensus that a pedestrian and bicycle link is needed at the location

where the AMT station currently is. However, this is not a link that needs to, or should be, be open to cars, as is proposed in the PDUÉS. Nobody drives to Jarry Park, and nobody drives to the metro or the bus. In fact, the proposal to open up six crossings over the tracks that is currently in front of the Canadian Transportation Agency is based on a study by the engineering firm Axor that *only* considered pedestrian and bicycle crossings, not car or truck traffic. No studies have been done to analyze the impact this opening would have on car traffic patterns in the area. The only study that the City has promised to do would be to look at the number of new residents and workers who are expected in the de Castelnau area and estimate their travel needs. This ignores the fact that thousands of cars take Jean-Talon each day from Acadie to Park Ave, and will surely go onto Ogilvy to access St-Urbain/Clark. Moreover, the City's study will only be completed in September. Data collected by the Direction de la santé publique clearly show that intersections on Ogilvy are already problematic and almost as dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers themselves as much busier Jean-Talon street (see diagrams in Appendices A, B & C provided by Dr Patrick Morency, who plots ambulance calls on a map to highlight collision-prone areas).

Lack of social or cooperative housing: As an active participant in all of the consultative sessions held by Acertys, the firm that received the contract to consider the needs of the PDUÉS area and make recommendations for the writing of the PDUÉS itself, I was rather shocked to see that there were almost no provisions for encouraging and protecting social housing in the PDUÉS zone. The need for diversified housing was a leitmotiv at all the consultation meetings, and was covered extensively in the Acertys report. All parties seemed to agree: we need more diversity of housing in the area. Hundreds of condo units have been put in the Marconi-Beaumont zone, but not a single unit of social or cooperative housing. In fact, since 2006 exactly 15 social housing *units* have been built in Park Extension. Our waiting lists for social housing is thousands of families and many years long, while this prime land right next to our neighbourhood is being sold off left and right with the complete accord – and zoning changes – of the borough officials. And the demographics of Park Extension, where many families have more than three children and the annual income is under the poverty line, mean that virtually all of the tiny, expensive condo units being built in the PDUÉS zone are inaccessible to them. Yet the PDUÉS document is remarkably vague on the whole subject, promising only to “aid in the acquisition” of a plot of land for social housing in the de Castelnau area. It is not said how large the plot or the project would be, what kind of housing would be there, nor even if the city will aid financially in the acquisition or if they will simply help change the zoning for a project that will ultimately be funded provincially.

To me it seems clear that the borough and city should work together to develop a fund to simply put buildings that are disused, or for sale, on “reserve”. This legal designation halts the rampant land speculation and gives first right of sale to the city. Creating this reserve of land would allow city planners to approach cooperative housing groups, of which there are many in search of a building, to help them set up a project and get financing from the provincial social housing budget. The borough should also follow the city's guidelines for its social inclusion strategy, and make mandatory the 15% social and 15% affordable units in projects of 200 units or more. Situations like the at 7400 St-Laurent, where the promoter of condos in a heritage building simply wrote a paltry cheque to get out of following these guidelines, should never occur again. I would even

say that the borough should apply the guideline to all the forthcoming condo projects in the PDUÉS zone, no matter how large. The area will not support any more projects over 200 units, so for the strategy to have any coherence it will need to follow the lead of other boroughs and make all developments follow the guidelines to include social and affordable housing.

Ceding of land for new de l'Épée park before it is even built: I know that there is not much to be done now, but I wish to register my disappointment that the new park proposed in the PDUÉS, in one of the last empty lots in Park Extension, has already been diminished by a fifth before any ground has even been broken. There was a lack of due diligence and of communication at City Hall, as the local borough knew of Videotron's plan to purchase the land along de l'Épée street north of the CP tracks even as the City was putting out press releases touting the new park that it planned to put there. The end result is that the community garden that the residents of nearby streets have been dreaming of and asking for these past five years will be shorter by 20%.

Confusing bicycle path: The overwhelming desire of residents of Park Extension is to be able to quickly and safely get in and out of Park Extension. The boundaries formed by the CP tracks, Highway 40, and the Acadie fence are staunch, leaving only five or six paths out of the neighbourhood. Except for the level crossing at Ball to Jarry Park, none of these paths are safe for cyclists. The most frequently-used exits are south along Park Avenue and east on Jean-Talon, but both have narrow, insalubrious, and dark underpasses mottled with potholes. The PDUÉS does have some arrows for bicycle paths in much-needed places, such as along Ogilvy and Querbes streets, but the overwhelming need is for a quick way to get downtown. To me it would make the most sense to put a bicycle lane either along Park Avenue or along Hutchison. Park Avenue is contiguous, thanks to the underpasses, but is heavily used. Hutchison is quiet and serene, but would require two level crossings across CP tracks. I would like to see the city at least explore these possibilities, instead of the current suggestions which have sections that jog here and there, run along streets that are only projected to be built in 7-10 years, and will unfortunately be ignored by many cyclists looking for a faster way home.

Lack of vision for 6590-6700 ave du Parc: The former mall at 6590 Park Avenue will be partially demolished for the entrance to the new Université de Montréal campus. As it is aging rapidly, has an unsightly parking lot on Park Avenue and will form the entrance to the new campus, it seems like the next few years would be a chance to build something beautiful and useful there. Certainly the many new residents of the area just east of Park Avenue would appreciate a public space, with parks and retail options. It could also be the site of a new housing project, social or cooperative, that incorporates green space and retail and/or office space. It could also be interesting to work with the building at 6700 Park Avenue, which was built by the Holland Varnish Company in 1910 before being bought by International Paints in 1929. Its interesting brickwork, geometry and volumes could be incorporated into a new building, or renovated and given a new vocation (currently it has unoccupied offices). The overall PDUÉS is full of small, discreet proposals; a plot and location like this one could be host to a major project that would increase density, add green spaces, remove a heat island, provide an entryway to the new campus and enhance what was otherwise a rather bland and unattractive stretch of Park Avenue.

Recommendations

In order of priority, here are my recommendations:

1. A diversity of housing must be put at the heart of the PDUÉS. The city and borough must commit to maintaining and creating a diversity of architecture, of available housing units, and of socio-economic class of residents. Park Extension is too crowded and too poor to allow the area right next to it to turn into a playground for the wealthy, especially when it is at the expense of the industrial jobs that employed many residents of my neighbourhood. The city and borough must work together to create a land reserve to slow the area's spiralling speculative real-estate prices, and work with social and cooperative housing groups to access and build on those plots. Furthermore, the borough must apply the social inclusion guidelines for all new development projects, regardless of size.
2. A bike path should be put in either along Park Avenue or Hutchison street to allow quick and safe transport between Park Extension and downtown. A bicycle and pedestrian link *only* should be opened between Ogilvy and de Castelnau streets.
3. The creation of public green spaces is highly welcomed, including the loops at Park Avenue and Beaumont/Jean-Talon, the future park at de l'Épée and the negotiated understandings with private property owners along the CP tracks south of Jean-Talon and towards Jarry Park, north of de Castelnau.
4. The creation of a new public green space with a combination of housing, retail and office space around it at the current site of 6950 Park Avenue should be explored by the city. Incorporation of the heritage building at 7600 Park Avenue would also be an interesting idea that deserves to be explored together with local and community actors.

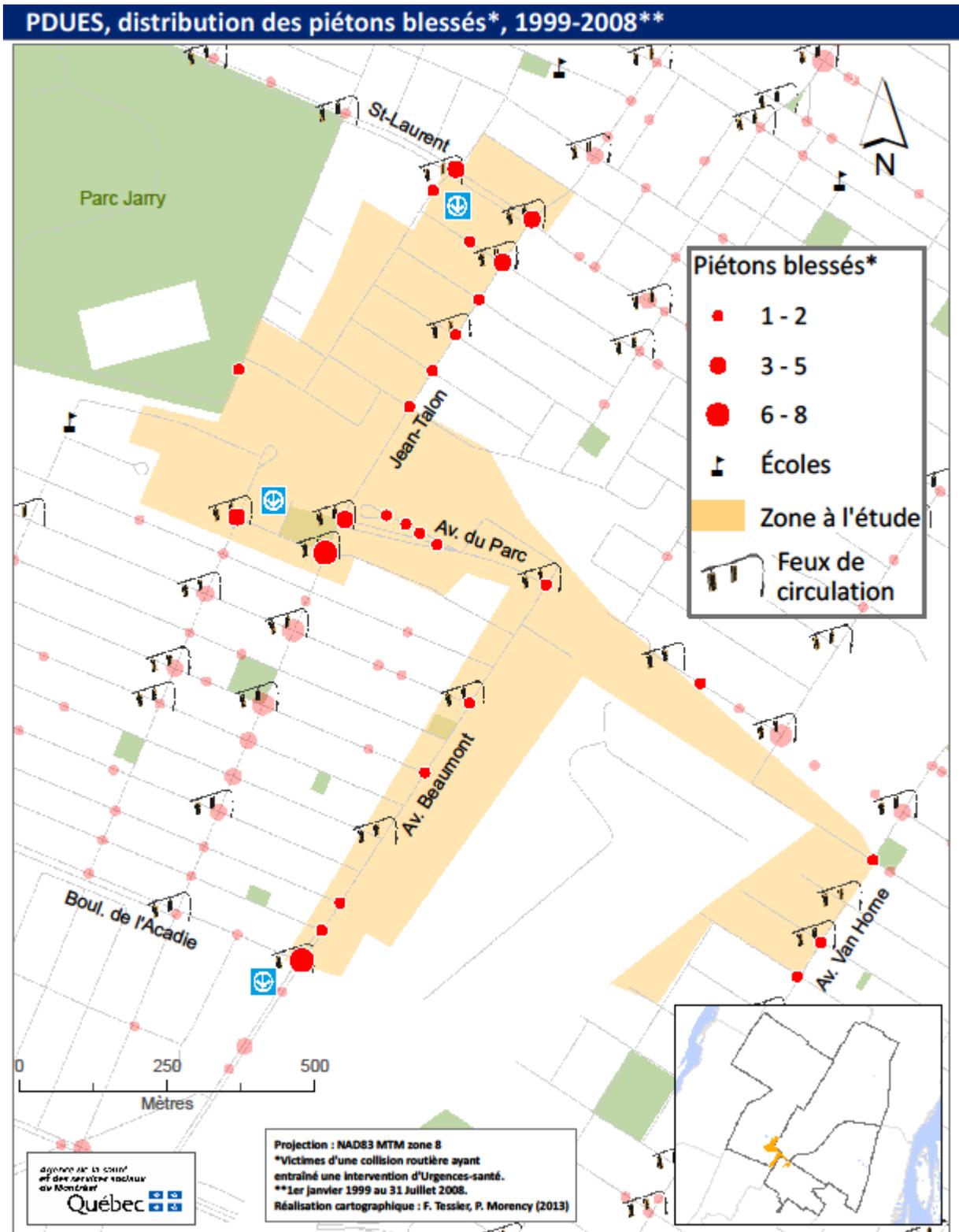
I thank you for your time and patience, and for the care that you are bringing as you consider the future of our beautiful neighbourhood.

Respectfully,



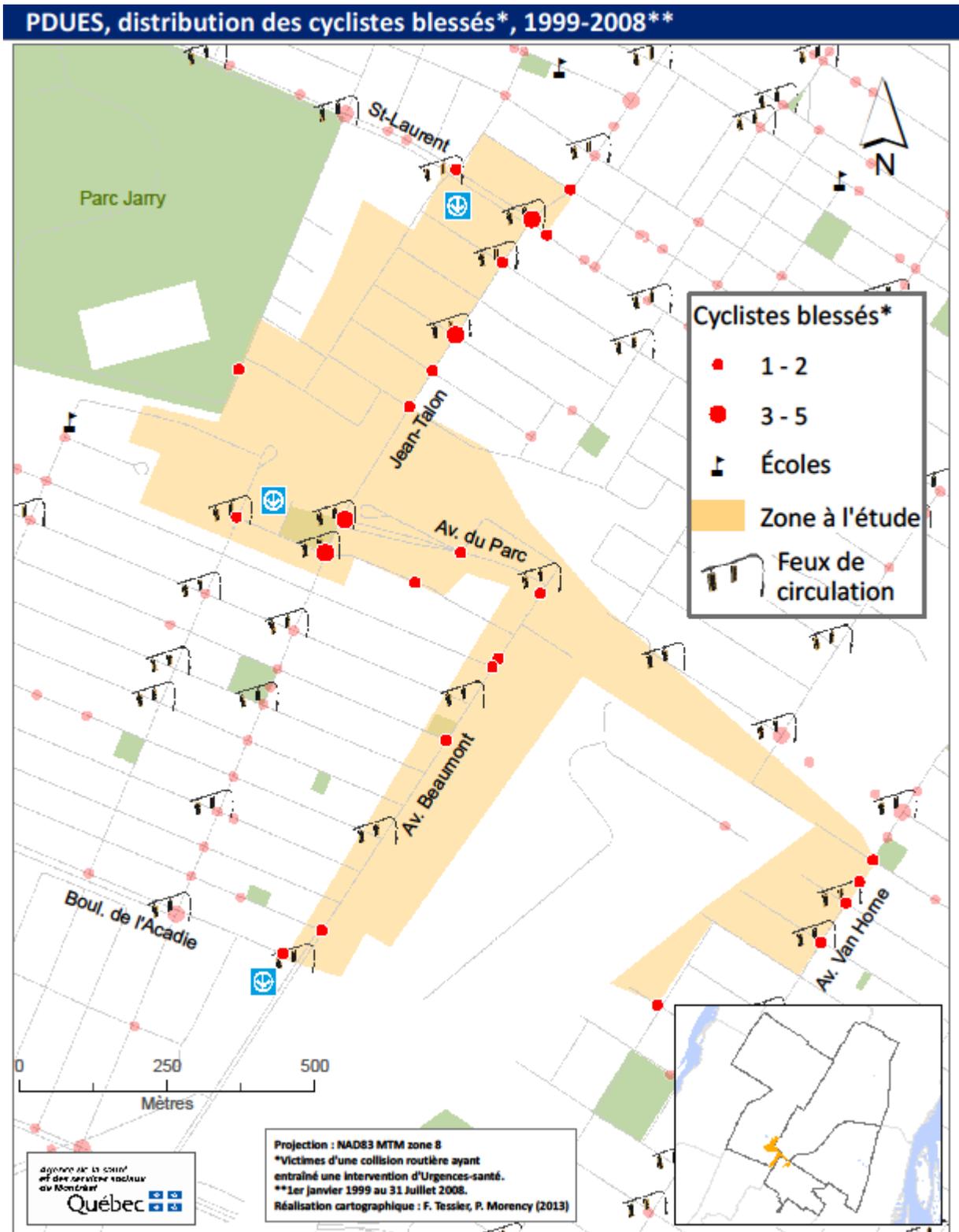
Sasha Dyck
Querbes avenue
Park Extension

Appendix A



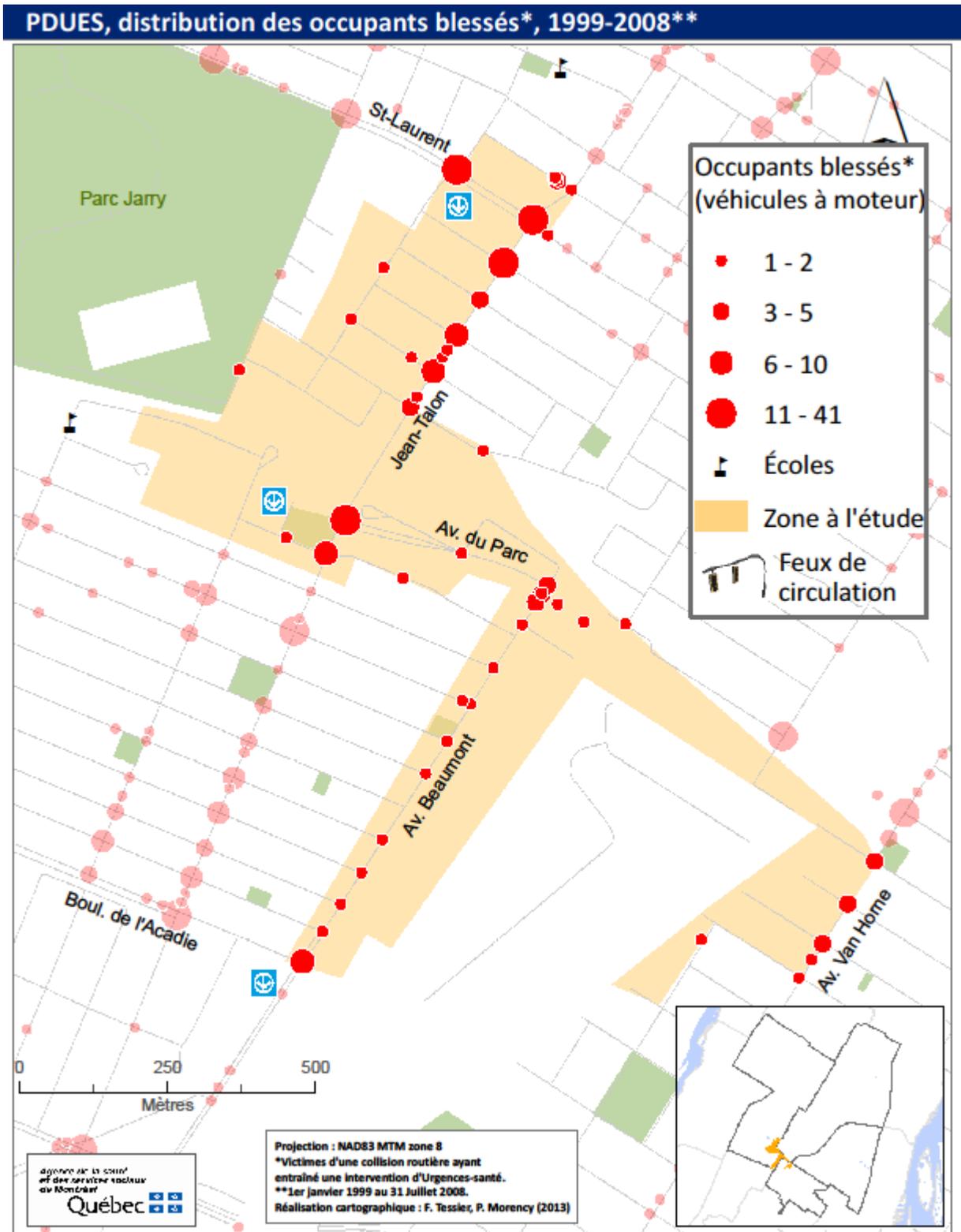
Map of collisions where pedestrians required an ambulance, from 1999 to 2008.

Appendix B



Map of collisions where cyclists required an ambulance, from 1999 to 2008.

Appendix C



Map of collisions where people in automobiles required an ambulance, from 1999 to 2008.