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At the epicenter of growth, motocross track misplaced

While we appreciate that Terry and Doug Argenbright have worked hard to plan their proposed Valley Xtreme Park they'd like to see open at Augusta Expoland, the fact remains that the Fishersville location simply is too crowded for such a venture.

In 2002, Russell Schmidt applied for a special use permit to open a similar track at Dry Branch and Whiskey Creek roads near Churchville. The Augusta County Board of Zoning Appeals turned down the request because the park would disturb a hundred or more nearby residents. Schmidt considered Expo as an alternative, but didn't follow through.

Now come the Argenbrights with a plan that includes motocross along with a half-dozen other outdoor sports opportunities.

The Argenbrights chose Expoland, they said, because the land is accessible, is already zoned for business and has the needed approvals from the state Department of Transportation.

It's true that several times a year motocross fans enjoy the sport at Expoland. Promoters secure special use permits for such events, granted by the BZA and tolerated by neighbors because they are brief and infrequent.

But it's not practical that the hundreds of nearby residents would have to endure the noise five days a week in perpetuity

When the county's growth billowed by 20 percent between 1990 and 2000, the quiet area known as Fishersville changed dramatically.

Sitting still sleepily at the intersection was Augusta Expoland, nearly 100 acres of mostly undeveloped land zoned for general business and with highway department approvals making it ripe for development.

The Argenbrights picked the ripe fruit — but they have an ill-suited plan — even with their promise that its noise would be acceptable to neighbors.

We don't argue that there's a desire for a park that the Argenbrights want to build, and we're sure that by the planning they've already done, it would be well run and successful.

Augusta County has planned for its urban growth in pockets like this one in Fishersville. Residential and commercial uses are bound to butt heads.

In this case, the residents have precedent on their side, and they should prevail.

Looking down the road, county residents as well as representatives must ask themselves: What would this area look like with a noise-generating motocross park, and what would it look like without it?

We prefer the version without, one that will over the years draw clean quiet business and more high-valued residential neighborhoods.

As for the Argenbrights' plan, it requires more of a geographic barrier. The only people who should hear the noise should already have paid at the gate.
