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Figuring Out If 'Opportunity Zones' Can Revitalize Struggling Neighborhoods.

In two Alabama cities, those laying groundwork for the new tax incentive program see both promise and risks in the investments it could spur.

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Boarded-up houses and vacant storefronts dot the streets of Woodlawn.

They're are a reminder of the uphill economic battle the community is fighting, and of its history as a place that had a freeway carved through it, and that saw white families move away in the years after school desegregation began in Alabama in the 1960s. The neighborhood is also located in a county that underwent one of the biggest municipal bankruptcies in U.S. history.

But Perry Macon, pastor at the First Baptist Church of Woodlawn, warns against portraying the neighborhood in too harsh a light. "As you drive through, you will see some deterioration in housing and business. But see, in my mind, I wouldn't see that as a negative," he said.

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Route Fifty

by Bill Lucia

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