



# Tiffany Barnes

**Barnes Realty Group**

Fort Myers native Tiffany Barnes had already established herself as an entrepreneur, with a successful background in sales and an e-commerce site that brings innovative women's haircare products to market. A few years ago, she decided to branch in a new direction: real estate.

"I was very new to it, very green," she says. She started by purchasing land and then built a duplex home from the ground up. She loved watching the house emerge and decided to go full throttle, establishing Barnes Realty Group, with a focus on affordable housing. Doing so allows her to directly influence the three pillars upon which she believes a strong community is built: access to jobs, affordable housing, and recreational and cultural amenities. "When those things are working in tandem together, that's what makes a community stronger and more viable and that's how you create a better quality of life for the next generation," she says.

Recently, she purchased six lots with the goal of building single-family homes. But how to start?

Her quest to find a mentor coincided with the establishment of the nonprofit Catalyst Community Capital and its desire to train developers who share the firm's passion for creating high-quality affordable housing. "We're trying to be that resource that empowers people so they will be able to go out and continue doing this on their own," CEO Joe Bonora says.

"It was like the stars aligned," says Barnes.

The Catalyst team agreed to finance Barnes' single-family homes project and walk beside her. She accompanies Catalyst executives on meetings with the Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency and observes the team as they manage market-rate projects through Catalyst Asset Management.

"I'm so thankful. I know God placed someone in my life who is experienced and who has been where I plan to go," she says.