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Developer hosts artists in shipping containers at Seattle project site

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Real estate developer Barrientos Ryan LLC has partnered with local arts organizations on an innovative artist residency program.

The Storefronts UN[Contained] program gives temporary work space on a property by Seattle Center to a dozen artists whose work seeks to spark dialogue around social issues.

The Center of Contemporary Art (CoCA), Shunpike and Uptown Alliance set up three shipping containers on Third Avenue North between Mercer and Roy streets in Lower Queen Anne.

It's where Barrientos Ryan is planning the 285-apartment Center Steps project with another Seattle real estate company, Washington Holdings.

"Artists have a tremendous role today in dismantling social structure that perpetuate oppression," said Andrea Lim, project manager for Storefronts [UN]Contained, which also provides financial support to the artists. "Our objective is that the art produced by our artists in residence will move conscious bystanders toward taking tangible action for social causes."

Barrientos Ryan founder Maria Barrientos is a longtime Queen Anne resident and has worked with the Uptown Alliance to incorporate the group's goals into her company's developments in the neighborhood.

She said the idea for Storefronts [UN]Contained came from a desire to activate the Center Steps site with arts and culture. Barrientos Ryan also worked with the Uptown Arts and Culture Committee on the project.

The inaugural UN[Contained] works include literature by Anastacia Tolbert, wood carvings by Edward Raub and interactive videos by Anissa Amalia. Filmmaker Eliaichi Kimaro is working on site, and there will be an open house of her work on Oct. 21 from noon to 5 p.m.

Storefronts UN[Contained] also received support from Elysian Brewing and the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods.

In addition to Storefronts [UN]Contained, Washington Holdings and Barrientos Ryan worked with Urban Artworks to commission two murals for the site. One work is by Victor Melendez; the other by Lina Cholewinski and Connie Fu.

The City Steps property, where Teatro ZinZanni operated, was purchased from the Seattle Opera company earlier this year.

Around 55 of the apartments will be for lower-income households. Center Steps will also have ground-level retail and restaurant space as well as space for Uptown Alliance meetings. Pedestrians will be able to cut through the project, and there will be a public plaza with a water feature and public art.