



• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

# Culture and Arts Program Expansion Planned For 2022

by Liam Reidy, President, United Irish Cultural Center, (lreidy@irishcentersf.org)

VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO all. Many thanks to all those who helped us end 2021 on a high note, with very generous responses to our annual appeal, library raffle, and several funded pledges to the 2025 Project. We are grateful to all of you who made personal donations and contributions in memory of a loved one. A special thank you to the Rebel Cork Benevolent Association for their gift of \$250,000 and to the Government of Ireland, for the Strategic Diaspora Development Project Grant of \$100,000 towards the 2025 Project. Thank you to all those that have renewed their membership for 2022. January is our most active month for renewals, so watch out for your e-mailed or mailed invoice. We appreciate the support and remember there are many chances to avail yourself of member discounts during the spring to UICC sponsored cultural events. Look for discounts to two great upcoming concerts including Phil Coulter (February 5th) and Eileen Ivers (March 11th).

### Big Changes in Store for the West Side

Many of you will be aware of our own ambitious plan for redeveloping our facility at 45th and Wawona. Less may be known about the recently proposed multi-unit residential and retail development across the street (to the west) where the Sloat Garden Center is currently housed. The site was sold in 2020 to a developer for \$8.55 million, and last month we learned that the developers



A birds-eye view looking southwest shows the proposed new 12 story multi-unit building, across the street from the UICC.

propose to construct a 400-unit building reaching 12 story which will rise 125 feet in the air. While our own proposed vision for the new Irish Center reimagines it as a Community Center for the neighborhood—housing a museum, library, performing arts space, theater, swimming pool, gym, roof garden, 30 parking spots, hospital-ity space, and office space for local non-profits—it will feature no residential housing.

The proposed plans for the Sloat Garden Center would yield 400 condominium units (a mix of 128 studios; 96 one-bedrooms; 131 twos and 45 threes, ranging in size from 350 to 1,080 square feet), with 9,700 square feet of corner and Sloat Boulevard-facing retail space, an interior courtyard and two large roof decks for the building's residents, and a basement garage for 200 bikes and 56 cars. It is quite a daunting proposal (see photo here on this page), and the developers will submit plans in the coming months to the Planning Commission.

The west side of the city (Parkside and Sunset) is changing and has evolved dramatically in the 47 years since the Irish Center first opened its doors. The development proposals being submitted to Planning are from the surrounding neighborhoods (from traffic corridors like Taraval, Irving, Judah Streets) and the local community is part of that continuous evolution of the urban built environment which makes San Francisco a world-class city. We believe our proposed Irish American Community Center is part of that future vision for a constantly changing San Francisco.

### 2025 Project Updates

After a rigorous peer review of the architectural drawings, structural plans, and practicality of the interior and exterior features of the building over the past three months, the 2025 Project Building group (Redmond Lyons, Leo Cassidy, Mark Conroe, Seamus Canning, Michael Coleman, and myself), along with architects Studio BANA, aim to submit the plans

to the city Planning Department for review this month. The Preliminary Plan Assessment (PPA) was received from Planning on December 11th, and we are working toward the recommendations included in that report and also moving forward with our application for a Special Use District (SUD) for the site. Wind, shadow, and transportation studies are planned for this spring. We will be busy behind the scenes during much of January preparing a grant application to the state of California for partial funding of our 2025 Project.

### Kids Cultural Programming Expansion

During January and February, we will offer classes for kids (ages 7 years and up) to learn how to sing Irish songs and ballads, play Irish music, and a chance to act as part of a kids' drama program. We will offer kids the opportunity to learn how to play the tin whistle, bodhrán, banjo, guitar, keyboards, piano, and fiddle. Most of the music classes will take place on Saturdays. The Irish Pipers will provide instruction in piping and drumming on Thursday nights, while drama classes will take place on Friday evenings. More details on how to sign up are on the Irish Center website. At the end of the seven week workshop, local session musician Eamonn Flynn will produce a show on Saturday, February 26th, showcasing the history of Dublin, Ireland in songs and stories. Many of the kids in the Irish music, singing, and drama classes this spring will feature in the show.



IRISH CENTER  
2025 PROJECT  
S A N F R A N C I S C O

### Library and Scholarship Donations

Peggy Nevin reported robust participation for the 2nd Annual Raffle supporting the Patrick J Dowling Library & the Leo T Walsh Scholarship Funds. Congratulations to the fundraising prize winners; Tim Walsh, Patrick Carlin, Jr, & Melinda Madigan. A very heartfelt thank you to everyone that participated, both with raffle tickets and donations. Scholarship applications (open to graduating eighth graders & high School seniors) for the 2022 scholarship program will be available in February, due in March, and awarded in May. Details will be on the UICC website, scholarship tab, February 1, 2022.

### Irish Dance Showcase

While the Keepers of the Steps Irish Dance exhibition kicks off on Thursday, January 13th for three weeks, the John and Maureen Kennelly Memorial Feis is the highlight of the weekend of January 15-16th. Almost 300 Irish Dance competitors are expected at the Center over the weekend.

Until next month, stay safe.

## Irish Christmas Show Was A Great Success At The Center

THE CENTER HOSTED THE VERY EXCELLENT "An Irish Christmas Show" on Saturday, December 4th in the St. Patrick's Room. A capacity crowd was entertained by a vast arrangement of superb dancing, singing and Irish traditional music celebrating the international spirit of the holiday season. The award-winning cast was led by World Champion dancers Tyler Schwartz and Emily MacConnell as well

as Colm Alba and the Kerry Dance Troupe in a celebration of the great traditions of Christmas in Ireland: butter-making, chasing the wren on St. Stephen's Day, drawing down the half door. The singing of traditional Carols from the Kerry Voice Squad and superb music from the Kerry Traditional Orchestra made it to be an unforgettable Irish night.



Edward Doherty, Joscelyn and Renee Doherty.



Vonnice McGee and Joan Finucane.



Kerry and Ciara Kingham.



Jamie and Carolyn Fogarty.



Colleen Mulkerrins, Kathleen Smith and Joanne Prior.



Anne McGarvey, Mary Costello and Cathy McGarvey.



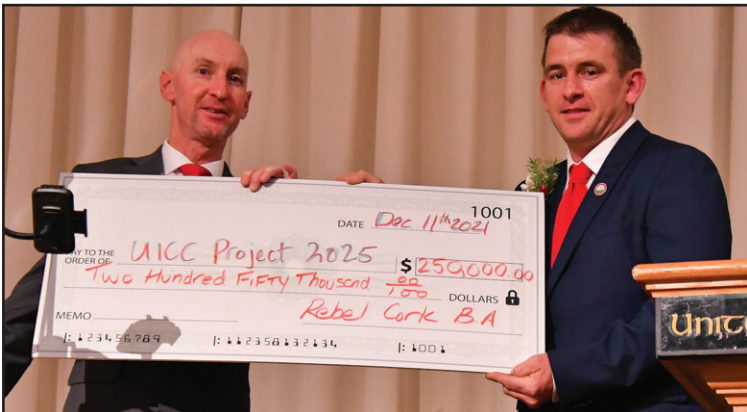
Ron and Julie Maykel, Pacifica.



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2025 Project Development Awards

THE YEAR JUST ENDED WAS a whirlwind year of excitement and optimism surrounding the redevelopment of the Irish Center. Many UICC members have stepped up early to pledge and fund donations to help get the project off the ground. We are truly amazed at the level of early support and commitment from our membership. The level of gift giving in the run up to Christmas and towards the end of the 2021 was extraordinary. Thank you so very much for the faith in our ambitious plans for the new Center. Two large donations were announced in December, with the Rebel Cork Benevolent Association and the Irish government providing initial financial support and credibility in the bold new future vision of the Center.



Rebel Cork Benevolent Association President Timmy Manning, presents Liam Reidy, UICC Board President with a check for \$250,000 for the 2025 Project.



Irish Ambassador to the US, Daniel Mulhall presents Liam Reidy with a check for \$100,000 on behalf of the Government of Ireland. The UICC applied for a Strategic Diaspora Development Project grant in October directly related to 2025 Project. A special word of thanks to the Consul Generals Office for supporting the grant application, especially Robert O'Driscoll and Elizabeth Creely.

Irish Ambassador To The US Visits The Patrick J Dowling Library

ON DECEMBER 11TH, THE IRISH Ambassador to the US, Daniel Mulhall and his wife Greta, visited the Patrick J Dowling Library at the UICC. Ambassador Mulhall signed the visitors log book, and heard about the history of the Library from Librarian Jennifer Drennan. Anne Cassidy Carew informed the Ambassador about the upcoming Keeper of the Steps Irish Dance Exhibition.



Photographed in the Dowling Library-Consul General Robert O'Driscoll, Librarian Jennifer Drennan, Ambassador Daniel Mulhall, wife Greta Mulhall, Liam Reidy, UICC President, Elizabeth Creely, and Anne Cassidy Carew.



Ambassador Mulhall examines an original copy of The Leader newspaper in the Dowling Library.

Keepers Of The Steps Exhibition Kicks Off January 13th, 2022

AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS of collecting stories, photographs, ephemera and cultural treasures around the history of Irish Dance in the San Francisco Bay Area the much anticipated exhibition kicks off on Thursday January 13th in the St. Francis room. It will run for three weeks and end on Sunday January 30th. Tickets are now on sale at <http://www.IrishCenterSF.org> Well done to the organizing committee on a job well done: Anne Cassidy Carew, Kathleen Martin-McKeon, Jamie O'Keefe, Peggy Flanders, Jennifer Drennan, Michael Dillon, Ann Baglin, Eileen Mize and Noreen Boyle.



KATHLEEN MAVOURNEEN!

WINNER of the preparatory championship trophy at Feis Erin 1971 was Kathleen Carey of San Francisco, a student of the McTeggart School. Here Kathleen is being presented with her prize by James Lucey of the Irish Festival committee.

BILLY IS A CHAMP



Pictured clockwise from top:  
1) The Kennelly School of Irish Dancing North American Irish Figure Dance Champions, from the early 1990s; Back row L to R: Sheila Burke, Emily Parker, Linda Brosnan, Sheelagh Murphy, Jennifer Flannery, Lisa Flannery, Patricia Kennelly. Second Row: Anne Marie Hagen, Siobhan Whelan, Lisa Brosnan, Colleen Walsh, Miriam Clark, Geraldine Slattery. Front Row: Allison Martin, Sheila Whelan, Sharon Whelan, Betsy Vos.  
2) Feis Erin 1971 Minor Irish Dance Champion, Billy Quirke, with his parents Martin and Dora, and teachers John and Maureen Kennelly.  
3) A collection of Irish dance medals from the first part of the twentieth, loaned by Anne Healy.  
4) Trophy won by the Anne Healy Irish Dance academy at the 1948 St. Patricks Day Parade.  
5) A youthful Michael Dillon (now a local SF Bay area Teacher), Champion Irish Dancer.  
6) James Lucey presents Kathleen Carey with her dance trophy at the 1971 Feis Erin.



The United Irish Cultural Center presents

KEEPERS OF THE STEPS

150 YEARS OF IRISH DANCE in the San Francisco Bay Area

THUR, FRI, SAT, SUN from

JANUARY 13-30, 2022

St. Francis Room

United Irish Cultural Center

2700 45th Ave | San Francisco, CA 94116

Don't miss this special exhibit exploring the roots, rhythms, and rituals of one of the most enduring traditions of our Irish Heritage—Irish Dance.

TICKETS ON SALE NOW

[www.IrishCenterSF.org](http://www.IrishCenterSF.org)

Join the conversation!  
@keepersofthesteps