

Best City Club in the Southeast

The Charlotte City Club of North Carolina

This report describes the club history, facilities and costs, food, and club membership, which we visited for dinner in December 2015.



Club History

The Charlotte City Club had its origins in the Southern Manufacturers Club, founded in Charlotte in July 1894. This club had as its goals creating “a pleasant place” for social interaction, providing a good and reliable place to eat and entertain, promoting southern commercial development, and improving relations between various southern manufacturers and businessmen. Founding members included the publisher of the local paper, local businessmen, and people from as far away as New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.



President William Howard Taft (a member of the Cosmos Club) visited Charlotte in 1909 and was entertained at the Manufacturers Club. President Woodrow Wilson (another member of the Cosmos Club) visited Charlotte in 1916, and he visited the Manufacturers Club and dictated official letters there, using it as a temporary substitute for the White House. Other notable visitors during this period included the Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court, Charles Evans Hughes, General John J. Pershing, and

various US Cabinet members.

The club expanded and did well during the Roaring Twenties. Unfortunately, the Great Depression hit the club hard, and it closed its doors in 1934. At the end of World War II, pent-up demand for civilian goods caused a boom in Charlotte, and former members of the Manufacturers Club determined to re-create their previous club under a new name, the Charlotte City Club. The CCC (re)founding was led by the former Mayor of Charlotte, Herbert Baxter, and members of the local business community, and they obtained a state charter in January 1947.

The CCC expanded and moved locations several times, reflecting the growth of the city into a regional banking, transportation, educational and legal center. The CCC and its

members played a key role in preventing the downtown of Charlotte from being decimated by urban renewal, highway construction and suburban flight, so that today the downtown of Charlotte (at the center of which the Club is located) is vibrant, alive, and full of restaurants, hotels, banks, a convention center, sports arenas, an art complex, and a new, large and impressive city library.

In the 1960s the CCC and its leaders also played a significant role in peacefully desegregating the Charlotte hotels, restaurants and businesses, and President Kennedy pointed to Charlotte as a model for other southern cities to follow. During the 1970s and early '80s the Club was opened to all ethnic and racial minorities, and to women. In the 1990s the Club continued expansion and moved to its present location, at the top of the prestigious West Trade building, at the corner of the two primary streets in the large, prosperous downtown.

Over the past decade, the CCC has invested over \$8 million in renovations and remodeling its club space.

Club Facilities and Costs

The CCC is located on the 31st and 32nd floors of 121 West Trade Building, with excellent 40-mile views of downtown Charlotte and the surrounding countryside.



Club facilities include a large dining rooms, a smaller informal dining room, various meeting rooms, a ball room, members' lounge, small library, and a bar with dart board. These facilities are spread over two large floors, all with large windows and excellent views.

The Club décor is traditional English, with many leather chairs, parquet or marble floors, taupe walls, hunting prints, and high ceilings and large chandeliers in many of the meeting rooms and in the dining rooms.

The CCC has been selected as a Platinum Club of America, one of only four percent of private clubs in the nation to receive this award. As a result, the CCC is rated as the number one city club in the Southeast, and among the top 40 city clubs in the nation.

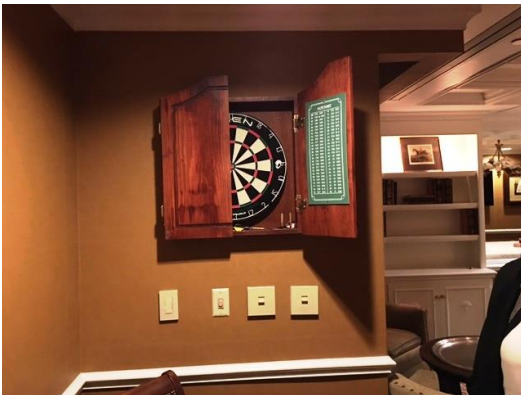
Affinity clubs within the CCC include fine wine, craft brewing, whisky and humidor, investing, golf, young professionals and football. A unique feature of the latter group is inviting former NFL players (including Super Bowl champions) to come and watch the games with the CCC members, and to comment on the action during and after the games. Affinity clubs cost extra and range in price from \$95 to \$595 per year.



Dress code throughout the CCC is business casual, except for certain specified formal events, and except that male members are requested to wear a jacket (but not necessarily a tie) in the Mecklenburg Room. According to the rules, “neat, tailored denim is allowed [!] in the Upper Club after 5 pm, and casual attire is permitted for certain events.”

Resident members 35 and older pay an initiation fee of \$4000 and monthly dues of \$158, with a food and beverage quarterly minimum of \$75. Young Professional members pay a sliding scale initiation fee ranging from \$1000 up to \$2750, depending on age, with monthly dues of \$105, and the same F&B minimum as older members.

Non-resident members pay a \$500 initiation fee, annual dues of \$508, and have a zero F&B minimum.



The CCC has its own reciprocal network of 150 city and other private clubs. For members who join the CCC and the Charlotte Athletic Club, both clubs reduce their membership fees significantly (since the CCC does not have athletic facilities). CCC members also have privileges at three nearby private golf courses.

In addition, through an optional individual member affiliation with Club Corp, CCC members may access a separate network of over 150 country clubs, business clubs and yacht clubs worldwide. This “Signature Gold” benefit comes in two levels: Dining, with a \$2000 initiation and \$30 fee per month; or Unlimited at a \$3000 initiation and \$65 per month. However, through negotiation, the CCC has obtained a waiver for both initiation fees, if the application to Club Corp is made when the person applies to the CCC for membership.

Note that the staff stressed that the CCC is not a “Club Corp club,” and the CCC is completely owned by CCC members, and only has this optional Club Corp-related benefit for some individual CCC members who sign up. Apparently this unusual benefit was negotiated by the General Manager, who has a good personal relationship with Club Corp.

There is no hotel wing in the CCC, but the club has relations with two hotels within 80 yards, the downtown Marriott and the Omni, and regular members and reciprocal members can get a 10% discount at either. We stayed at the Marriott, where the set senior rate was \$274 (rather steep) plus \$18 parking. We complained about reconstruction noise inside the hotel, and inquired about a government rate, and were awarded a new rate of only \$130! (However, until the construction is finished, we recommend the Omni.)

Food

We had a very good dinner at the club, consisting of she-crab soup (\$8), mixed grill (\$34), and BBQ ribs (\$16). We finished with a triple chocolate lava cake with passion fruit sauce (\$8). We rated the crab soup as an A+, better than any soup we have had at the Cosmos Club! The mixed grill was rated an A for the salmon, A for the filet mignon, and B for the tuna (too spicy). The BBQ ribs had an odd sauce, and thus were not successful, at a B-. Squash casserole was an A, and the lava cake was also an A. Altogether a very high rating, since we are tough graders. We did not have wine but noted that the club has a large wine list and cellar. Service was attentive.



Other typical dishes on the menu include palmetto quail, seven spice seared yellowfin tuna, bacon roasted shrimp cocktail, seared Scottish salmon, pan roasted duck breast, rack of lamb, and New York strip steak. Local catch and local market inspiration dishes are also always available.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served, with breakfast ranging from \$6 to \$8, a buffet lunch for \$16, and an a la carte lunch for \$10 to \$16. Breakfast and lunch are available Monday through Friday, with dinner being available Wednesday through Saturday.

Club Membership

The CCC has about 1000 members. Membership in the club is by nomination followed by invitation, and is considered by a selection committee, who review the nominee's standing in the community, reputation and record, and the nominating recommendation. There is no requirement for publications, but the club seeks only members who



will contribute to the spirit and activities of the club. Professions that are substantially represented include banking, finance, law, business and government. Women and all minorities are admitted and welcomed as full members.

Summary

The Charlotte City Club draws its members from the highest strata of North Carolina society and professions, and has excellent facilities and cuisine. The only downside is the lack of a hotel wing, which is ameliorated by the fact that reciprocal members can have access to two hotels at a discount, both within yards of the CCC. Importantly, the CCC is a Platinum Club and is rated as the top city club in the southeastern US.



Additional photos of the Club are presented below.



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