



The Real Cost of the Wrong Furniture

kwalu®



Ready to Buy Smarter?

The chairs looked great on day one. Then came the scratches, the chips, the replacements.

Five years later, you've paid for them—again.

If you've ever fielded complaints about wobbly arms, peeling finishes, or deep cleaning that never quite worked...

You already know the cost of getting it wrong.

This guide helps leaders spend smarter—whether replacing worn seating or planning a new build. It shows how furniture choice impacts costs, care, and community impressions over time.

Upfront Price vs. Total Cost of Ownership

In senior living communities, furniture isn't just décor—it's infrastructure. It impacts staff efficiency, resident satisfaction, infection control, and operational costs over time. But too often, purchasing decisions are made based on upfront cost alone.

What looks like a deal now can cost 3–4x more over the next 10 years.

In high-use spaces, furniture takes a beating: wheelchairs, mobility aids, chemical disinfectants. Most residential-grade options last 2–3 years. Then the replacements—and the costs—start piling up.



** (Based on average 10-year replacement costs of wood and metal alternatives.)



Maintenance & Labor Impact

Every time furniture breaks, your staff spends time managing the problem—time they could be spending on care.

Furniture that requires regular refinishing, tightening, or deep cleaning creates ongoing work for maintenance and housekeeping teams. And when pieces become unsafe or unsightly, the disruption often leads to unplanned spending and operational stress.

Real-World Example:
Dining Room Maintenance
with 40 Chairs*

Maintenance Task	Wood Chairs	Metal Chairs	Kwalu (Protea™)
Refinishing chipped surfaces	15 hrs / \$450	—	—
Repainting scratched or corroded metal	—	10 hrs / \$300	—
Tightening loosened joints or screws	10 hrs / \$300	10 hrs / \$300	—
Total Annual Maintenance	25 hrs / \$750	20 hrs / \$600	0 hrs / \$0

Now multiply that across resident rooms, lounges, and activity spaces.

*Labor hours and associated costs are illustrative estimates only. Actual maintenance needs may vary based on materials, usage intensity, and facility protocols.

Infection Control Is Cost Control

Disinfection isn’t just about cleaning protocols—it’s about materials. Furniture that absorbs moisture, traps bacteria, or breaks down under EPA-approved cleaners adds risk, not value.

Outbreaks can cost \$4,000–\$10,000+ in PPE, labor, and lost move-ins.

What to Avoid:

- > Wood or metal frames that chip, warp, rust, or crack over time
- > Finishes that degrade under bleach-based or EPA-approved disinfectants
- > Residential-grade upholstery without fluid barriers or chemical resistance
- > Exposed seams or joints that trap moisture and bacteria

What to Look For:

- > Non-porous frame surfaces that resist moisture hold up to EPA approved cleaners
- > Seamless construction that prevents fluid collection or bacterial buildup
- > Healthcare-grade upholstery options, including:
 - Fluid-barrier backings
 - Bleach-cleanable or antimicrobial properties

The Resident & Family Experience Also Has ROI

When furniture looks worn, mismatched, or institutional, it sends the wrong message—especially in an era when families expect more from senior living. Worn-out chairs don't just reflect wear—they reflect on your brand.

What families and residents notice (even if operators don't):

- Peeling finishes or cracked arms on dining chairs
- Stained upholstery or worn seating in lounges
- Mismatched or outdated pieces in public areas
- Furniture visibly “on its last leg”

Why it Matters:

First impressions = occupancy opportunities. Tours often begin in common areas—what families see can shape what they believe.

Comfort encourages engagement. Residents are more likely to participate in meals and activities in spaces that feel inviting.

Reliable furniture supports staff morale. When spaces function well and require less upkeep, teams can focus more on care—not repairs.





The 10-Year ROI That Most Buyers Miss

It's easy to underestimate the true cost of short-term furniture decisions. Short-term decisions come with long-term consequences. Cheap chairs often mean multiple replacements, constant maintenance, and extra labor.

Ask Before You Buy:

- > How often will this furniture need to be replaced?
- > What does it cost my team to maintain or clean it?
- > Can it be easily disinfected without degrading?
- > What message does this send to families walking in?
- > Will I still feel good about this investment five years from now?

The Plot Twist: Kwalu was built to flip the script—on design that doesn't deliver.

Crafted with Protea™

Looks like wood — but isn't. Protea™ is non-porous, impact-resistant, and won't chip, crack, or warp. No refinishing. No surprises.

Steel-Reinforced Construction

Over 20 hidden steel reinforcements in every classic chair frame. Wobble? Not in this story.

10
YEARS

Backed by a 10-Year Performance Warranty on construction and finish. Because the best endings don't need rewrites.

Full warranty details available upon request.

Want a custom ROI comparison? Let's run the numbers.

At Kwalu, we create nurturing environments that inspire care, comfort, and connection in healthcare and senior living.

For over 30 years, we've crafted high-quality, durable furniture that enhances the spaces where people live, heal, and build community. What sets us apart is Protea™, our proprietary, non-porous material that offers the beauty of wood with unmatched durability. Inspired by the resilient Protea flower, it ensures our furniture withstands high-traffic environments while remaining easy to clean and maintain.



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6160 Peachtree Dunwoody Rd. Building C, Atlanta, GA 30328

1-877-MY-KWALU [kwalu.com](https://www.kwalu.com)

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