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**FALCON™**

**Senior Living Facilities**

**THE ART OF DESIGNING DINING ROOMS**

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# Senior Living Facilities

## THE ART OF DESIGNING DINING ROOMS

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### Introduction

**In senior living communities, dining rooms do more than serve meals—they foster connection, dignity, and daily comfort.** The challenge is to create spaces that prioritize safety, accessibility, and warmth without sacrificing beauty. Every table, chair, and fabric must be carefully considered not only for its aesthetic contribution but also for how it supports aging bodies, reduced mobility, and evolving health needs. This white paper offers expert-backed insight into the core elements of dining furniture design that elevate both the resident experience and the quality of care.



**THE RESIDENTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH AMBULATORY AND DIMINISHED FACULTY OR MOBILITY ISSUES, MUST FEEL COMFORTABLE AND SAFE WHEN USING THE FURNITURE.**

Leah Bauer, Allied Member ASID, Associate IIDA, associate and senior interior designer in the Omaha office of Leo A Daly.

From casters to antimicrobial finishes and ergonomic design, the right furniture choices can transform a dining area into a safe, welcoming centerpiece of senior living life. Drawing on the knowledge of seasoned designers and healthcare design experts, **this guide highlights the materials, dimensions, and features that matter most** — empowering you to make thoughtful, functional selections for senior living facilities.





## BEYOND DURABILITY

# Choosing Chairs for Comfort, Cleanability & Design

**In Senior Living Environments**, dining chairs must do more than look good—they need to provide safety, comfort, and durability every single day. Residents often face mobility challenges, and the furniture should support their independence while minimizing risk. Armchairs with solid reinforced arms, appropriate seat dimensions, and comfortable suspension **help residents feel secure and at ease.**

## Finishes

Surfaces need to withstand constant cleaning and frequent contact with lotions, disinfectants, and wear. That's why designers need finishes that perform as well as they present. Durable commercial-grade options like conversion varnishes, and polyurethane are widely used—but even these can show wear over time, especially when exposed to sunlight.

For a solution that delivers both performance and beauty, **Tufgrain™ by Falcon offers the warmth and texture of wood with the durability of metal.** Unlike traditional wood finishes, Tufgrain is easy to clean, moisture-resistant, and designed to maintain its appearance in high-use settings. And because it's applied over a metal frame, there are no joints to fail. Tufgrain is epoxy based so it resists chipping — making it ideal for senior living environments where hygiene, resilience, and longevity are essential.

## Fabrics & Upholstery

The selection of durable and easily maintainable fabric is paramount in senior living dining environments. Key considerations include:

- **Wear Resistance:** Aim for a minimum Wyzenbeek abrasion rating of 40,000 to 50,000 double rubs for optimal longevity. Many upholstery options span much higher which will protect the chairs from pilling over time.
- **Coated Fabrics** such as Vinyl and Urethane are easy to clean durable options which have become a highly specified solution.
- **Stain Management:** Fabrics should feature robust soil and stain-resistant treatments to handle spills and incontinence. Technologies like Nano-Tex® provide a barrier against liquids.
- **Fiber Performance:** Durable blends of polyester and nylon are recommended for long-term wear. 100-percent polyester is also a strong contender for dining chairs due to its resilience and ease of cleaning. Coated fabrics (polyurethane vinyl) offer the highest level of cleanability for high-use areas. Designers will often specify a chair with a vinyl or urethane seat and a fabric back.
- **Aesthetics and Practicality:** Pattern and color choices should align with the dining room's theme. Small patterns and mixed patterns can aid in concealing stains. While color preferences vary, medium-colored prints are generally the most practical for hiding spills.



**Chair Dimensions** Optimal chair selection for senior living dining areas balances safety, comfort, and functionality. Designs should feature soft, rounded edges and dimensions accommodating smaller individuals, with a recommended minimum seat width of 19.5 inches (including bariatric options) and a seat depth of 19-20 inches.



**Chair Mobility** Regarding mobility, front-leg casters offer a controlled solution for residents moving at the table, mitigating the fall risk associated with fully mobile chairs, especially on hard surfaces. Perkins Eastman advises caution with casters on hard flooring, potentially requiring a client disclaimer.

**Chair Cushions** For superior and lasting comfort, spring seat suspension systems are recommended over elastic webbing or basic foam. Specifying high-quality, commercial-grade foam (minimum 1.8 lbs/sq ft) with appropriate Indentation Load Deflection (ILD) for desired softness is crucial for resident well-being and accurate cost comparison.



## BEYOND DURABILITY

# 4 Essentials for Senior Living Dining Tables

### 1. Table Sizes

To balance individual needs and group activities, many senior living facilities choose **42-inch square tables**. Resident safety and comfort are prioritized with radius corners or bullnose edges. **Adjustable height tables** help accommodate wheelchairs and chair arms. When selecting tables, it's crucial to account for the dimensions of commonly used armchairs, avoiding designs that may restrict access.

### 3. Table Tops

For beautiful, durable, and low-maintenance surfaces, consider laminate options with wood grain or a pattern which will help hide wear over the life of the top. If real wood is specified, be sure the top coat is conversion varnish or urethane so that it is durable enough for the multiple times per day the tables are cleaned and disinfected.



**BEAUTIFUL, COMFORTABLE, AND SAFE FURNITURE SPEAKS VOLUMES ABOUT QUALITY, ESPECIALLY IN SENIOR LIVING WHERE DINING IS A CENTRAL PART OF THE DAY. "A DINING FACILITY IS A PLACE TO NOURISH ONE'S BODY AND SOUL."**

Amy Sickeler IIDA, AAHID, LEED AP BD+C LEED AP, design principal and principal in the Atlanta office of Perkins+Will

### 2. Table Bases

In senior living dining spaces, **pedestal table bases** are particularly popular due to the ease of access they provide for residents using chairs or wheelchairs, eliminating potential knee bumping, and helps pull in more people for socializing. To ensure stability and prevent tipping, **table bases made of cast iron or steel are highly desirable**, provided they are correctly proportioned to the tabletop.

### 4. Flip-Top Tables

Increasingly popular for their adaptability, flip-top or folding tables with rolling capabilities are essential for multi-purpose spaces. To maintain a non-institutional aesthetic and ensure safety, opt for tables with a wider pedestal.







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### ABOUT FALCON

**For over 65 years**, Falcon has been the trusted partner for facility managers seeking high-quality table and seating products for learning, dining, and meeting spaces. Falcon's innovative furniture solutions empower libraries to adapt to changing needs while maintaining a welcoming and functional environment.

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