

# Hey Ben Carson: Here are 10 'decent' chairs for your office

HUD chief's swanky office furnishings sent us chair shopping

By [Diane Cowen](#) Updated 7:19 pm, Wednesday, February 28, 2018



Photo: Giorgetti



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Giorgetti's beautiful leather Mobius chairs start at \$2,600.

[Reports from the New York Times](#) that Ben Carson, secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, has spent thousands of dollars on new furnishings for his Washington D.C. office has many scratching their heads.

Just as the Trump administration has proposed billions of dollars in cuts to his department -- an agency that helps the homeless, poor and elderly -- Carson spent more than \$31,000 just on a dining set for his office, saying the cost is "totally reasonable."

Carson's wife, Candy, who's an informal adviser to her husband, pushed for the purchase of custom table, chairs and hutch even before Carson took office. The purchase also circumvented federal law requiring congressional approval for any purchase over \$5,000 "to furnish or redecorate the office of a department head."

Candy Carson pushed Helen G. Foster -- a former top H.U.D. official who reportedly was demoted and transferred when she pushed back on the topic -- saying that "\$5,000 will not even buy a decent chair."

Perhaps Candy Carson needs to shop at some new stores -- or find an interior designer who knows how to stay in a budget. There are plenty of "decent" chairs out there -- even some "great" ones -- for less than \$5,000.

In the swanky new West Avenue CASA showroom, where high-end Italian brands reign, even some of their wares should please the Carsons as well as their congressional bean counters.

CASA co-owner Jerry Hooker said their exquisite Giorgetti brand has dining chairs that start at \$1,000. Their Ala chair starts at \$1,200 and the beautiful and structural Mobius chairs start at \$2,600. Right now the showroom has a Mobius chair in blue velvet on display, and it's hard to imagine that chair not looking spectacular in any home or office.

"You could get a full dining set for \$15,000 -- and that's Giorgetti. That's still a lot -- I don't mean to sound pretentious -- but no one would turn their nose up at Giorgetti," Hooker said.

Barbara Shoemaker, co-owner of the Bunch & Shoemaker showroom at the Houston Design Center, said that it's the price of fabric that drives up the cost of a chair. "I have a Hickory Chair chair that is \$3,941 retail, and freight's another \$115. That's with a grade 40 -- middle grade -- fabric. It's a nice chair ... you wouldn't need anything nicer than that," Shoemaker said.

Connie LeFevre at Design House agreed, and noted that they come with national pride as well: "There is definitely a market for high-end items that are American made with much skill and care at a reasonable price point."

At Lam Bespoke, a retail store that draws many interior designers, their designer-grade club chairs are made with kiln-dried hardwood and then crafted with eight-way hand-tied strings.

"The base price is \$2,000 plus the cost of fabric. In linen, off the floor, it's \$2,300," said sales rep Sarah Chrisman. "I consider them better than decent chairs. They're the best quality you can get around town."

Here are 10, not necessarily for the dining room because, let's face it, Carson's office likely also has a sitting/living room area, too.

**1.Giorgetti Ala chair:** As dining chairs go, Giorgetti's Ala is about as sleek as they come. It starts at \$1,200 upholstered, so don't be afraid to upgrade to butter-soft leather. Find it in Houston at the CASA showroom at West Avenue.

**2.Mobius chair:** Also in the Giorgetti family, the Mobius chair is so pretty that Carson's visitors would want to take selfies with it. The low-back version of these chairs start at \$2,600, primarily because the chair's arm has no internal support, so it requires high-grade leather.

**3.Wassily chair:** You really and truly cannot beat classic design. The Wassily chair was designed in 1925 by Marcel Breuer when he was still an apprentice at the Bauhaus. The uber-talented designer's many chair and furniture designs are still coveted and his original works command high prices. You can buy an authentic Wassily chair through Knoll.com for \$2,675 and anyone who visits your office will think you're absolutely the coolest cabinet member ever. Ever.

**4.Mies van der Rohe:** Actually more famous -- and a much nicer guy -- than Frank Lloyd Wright. And his furniture was imminently more comfortable than FLW's. While MVDR's long-sought-after Barcelona chair doesn't meet the \$5,000 cap, his Krefeld lounge chair does, and it's highly suitable for an office. His 1927 design's classic details and clean lines stand the test of time -- and you can pick one up on knoll.com for \$2,523.

**5.Sherrill swivel lounge chair:** Sherrill Furniture's American-made swivel chair is classic and comfortable and, in Sunbrella upholstery goes for \$2,245 at Design House at the Houston Design Center.

**6.DesignMaster side chair:** Let's say you want something traditional -- highback, tufted, the whole bit. And make it on-trend with weathered wood. Design Master makes this great side chair - - it would work at the head of a dining table, too -- for \$1,315. Feel free to upgrade to executive leather.

**7. Charles II Club Chair:** At Lam Bespoke, where regular shoppers and interior-designer escorted homeowners alike shop, chairs can be bought off the floor or customized with various fabrics. The Charles II is the shop's most popular club chair, and starts at \$2,300.

**8. Houstonian Club Chair:** And Lam Bespoke's Houstonian chair starts at \$2,300, which gives you plenty of room financially to upgrade the fabric.

**9. Sarreid round-back armchair:** The carved details in this walnut chair with a leather seat are a work of art. It would be a nice accent chair in any office -- in any city. It's made in Italy and runs \$1,765.

**10. Louis Ghost chair:** In 2002, designer Philippe Starck reinvented the classic Louis XVI armchair for Kartell, maker of very modern and very Italian home furnishings. It's called the Ghost Chair, and it runs \$445, and would look very striking around any dining table -- used in an office or otherwise.