**Hardware**

**Lowe’s**

[**https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s)

[**https://www.cbsnews.com/news/home-depot-lowes-other-home-centers-go-from-bad-to-worse/**](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/home-depot-lowes-other-home-centers-go-from-bad-to-worse/)

[**https://www.theburningplatform.com/tag/lowes/**](https://www.theburningplatform.com/tag/lowes/)

**https://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/20/business/20lowes.html**

The first Lowe's store, **Lowe's North Wilkesboro Hardware**, was first opened in [North Wilkesboro, North Carolina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Wilkesboro,_North_Carolina) in 1921 by Lucius Smith Lowe (1879–1940).[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s#cite_note-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s#cite_note-6)[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s#cite_note-7) After Lowe died in 1940, the business was inherited by his daughter Ruth, who sold the company to her brother Jim that same year. Jim took on Carl Buchan as a partner in 1943.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s#cite_note-Williams-8)

Buchan anticipated the dramatic increase in construction after [World War II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II), and under his management, the store focused on [hardware](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Household_hardware) and building materials.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s#cite_note-9) Before then, the product mix had also included [notions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Notions_(sewing)), [dry goods](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dry_good), [horse tack](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horse_tack), [snuff](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snuff_(tobacco)), produce, and groceries. The company bought a second location in [Sparta, North Carolina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sparta,_North_Carolina) in 1949.

Lowe and Buchan differed on expanding the company to new areas and they split in 1952 with Buchan (himself) taking control of the hardware and building supply business and Lowe taking other joint ventures the two controlled (including a car dealership). Buchan became the sole owner of Lowe's. In 1954, Lowe started the [Lowes Foods](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowes_Foods) grocery store chain.

By 1955, Buchan quickly expanded the company by opening stores in the North Carolina cities of [Asheville](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asheville,_North_Carolina), [Charlotte](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlotte,_North_Carolina), and [Durham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durham,_North_Carolina). More stores opened through the 1950s.

In 1961, Buchan died of a [heart attack](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heart_attack) at age 44.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s#cite_note-10) His five-man executive team, which included [Robert Strickland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Strickland) and [Leonard Herring](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Leonard_Herring&action=edit&redlink=1), took the company public in 1961.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s#cite_note-11) By 1962, Lowe's operated 21 stores and reported annual revenues of $32 million.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s#cite_note-12) Lowe's began trading on the [New York Stock Exchange](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Stock_Exchange) in 1979.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s#cite_note-Williams-8)

Lowe's suffered in the 1980s due to market conditions and increasing competition from the new [big-box](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big-box_store) store chain, [The Home Depot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot). For a while, Lowe's resisted adopting the mega-store format partly because its management believed the smaller towns where Lowe's mostly operated would not even support huge stores. However, Lowe's eventually had to adopt the big-box format in order to survive. Today, most Lowe's stores are part of the big-box variety, although some classic format stores remain in smaller markets.

Lowe's has since grown nationally, as it was aided by the purchase of the [Renton, Washington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renton,_Washington)-based **Eagle Hardware & Garden** company in 1999.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s#cite_note-13) It is now the 2nd largest home improvement store chain in North America and has begun expanding outside the United States. The first store outside of United States was in [Hamilton, Ontario](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamilton,_Ontario), Canada.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)]

According to their website, Lowe's has operated/serviced more than 2,355 locations in the United States, Canada, and Mexico alone.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s#cite_note-14)

On November 5, 2018, Lowe's announced that it will be closing 51 under-performing stores, 20 stores in the United States and 31 in Canada under the Lowe's and Rona names by February 2019.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s#cite_note-15)

**Home Depot**

[**https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\_Home\_Depot**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot)

[**https://www.cbsnews.com/news/home-depot-gains-by-turning-recession-into-opportunity/**](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/home-depot-gains-by-turning-recession-into-opportunity/)

[**https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2008-05-20/home-depot-and-lowes-get-hammeredbusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice**](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2008-05-20/home-depot-and-lowes-get-hammeredbusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice)

[**https://abcnews.go.com/Business/story?id=6949257&page=1**](https://abcnews.go.com/Business/story?id=6949257&page=1)

[**https://www.thedailybeast.com/for-the-housing-market-a-home-depot-recovery**](https://www.thedailybeast.com/for-the-housing-market-a-home-depot-recovery)

[**http://www.nbcnews.com/id/43974931/ns/business-retail/t/eight-major-retailers-taking-major-beating/#.XALAVhNKjmE**](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/43974931/ns/business-retail/t/eight-major-retailers-taking-major-beating/#.XALAVhNKjmE)

**https://www.cnbc.com/id/100751216**

1980-1999

The Home Depot began to branch out of Georgia to Florida in 1981 with stores opening in [Hollywood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hollywood,_Florida) and [Ft. Lauderdale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ft._Lauderdale,_Florida). By 1984 The Home Depot was operating 19 stores with sales of over $256 million. To enter the [Dallas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dallas) market The Home Depot acquired Bowater Home Center from Bowater Inc. on October 31, 1984 for $40 million.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-10) The increased expansion of The Home Depot in the mid-1980s created financial difficulties with earnings falling at 42% and debt rising to $200 million. The financial difficulties of The Home Depot also caused the stock price to fall. To curb The Home Depot difficulties it opened only 10 stores in 1986 with a stock offering 2.99 million shares at $17 per share that helped The Home Depot to restructure its debts.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-11)

In 1989 The Home Depot became the largest home improvement store in the United States surpassing Lowe's. In the 1990s The Home Depot searched for ways to redefine its marketplace. An installation program for quality home improvement items such as windows or carpets was launched in 1991 called the EXPO with success. A 480-page book *Home Improvement 1-2-3* was published in 1995. The Canadian hardware chain [Aikenhead's Hardware](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aikenhead%27s_Hardware" \o "Aikenhead's Hardware) was acquired by The Home Depot in 1994 for $150 million with a 75% share. All of the Aikenhead's Hardware stores were later converted to The Home Depot stores.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-12) By 1995, sales reached $10 billion while operating 350 stores.

Former [General Electric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Electric) executive [Robert Nardelli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Nardelli) became CEO and President of The Home Depot in 2000.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-13)

**2000-2007**

San Diego maintenance and repair supplies company Maintenance Warehouse was purchased by The Home Depot in 1997 for $245 million.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-14) Maintenance Warehouse was purchased because it was a leading direct-mail marketer of maintenance, repair and operations supplies that can reach customers out of reach by The Home Depot.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-15)[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-16) Atlanta-based company Apex Supply was acquired by The Home Depot in 1999. Apex Supply is a wholesale distributor of plumbing, HVAC, industrial pipe and fittings.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-17) Apex Supply and Maintenance Warehouse were rebranded in 2004 as **The Home Depot Supply**.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-18)

In 2004, Home Depot employees at a suburban Detroit store in [Harper Woods, Michigan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harper_Woods,_Michigan), rejected a bid to be represented by a [labor union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor_union), voting 115 to 42 against joining the United Food and Commercial Workers. If the union had won, the Michigan store would have been the first Home Depot to have union representation.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-19)

**Your Other Warehouse**, a large plumbing distributor with a focus on special order fulfillment, was acquired by The Home Depot in 2001. Your Other Warehouse also supplied two divisions of The Home Depot and the EXPO Design Centers.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-20) The **EXPO Design Center** division was reorganized in 2001 with three divisions based in the Northeast at [South Plainfield, New Jersey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Plainfield,_New_Jersey), the West at [Orange, California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange,_California), and the Southeast at [Atlanta, Georgia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlanta,_Georgia).[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-21)

The Home Depot entered the [Mexican](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexico) market in 2002 with the acquisition of the home improvement chain Del Norte. In addition, The Home Depot had begun construction of stores in [Mexicali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexicali) and [Tijuana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tijuana).[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-22) In the same year the [Home Depot Landscape Supply](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_Depot_Landscape_Supply) was launched to integrate professional landscapers and upscale plants into a [plant nursery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plant_nursery) retail chain.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-23) Home Depot Landscape Supply lasted only five years with only a few stores each in metro Atlanta and [Dallas/Fort Worth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dallas/Fort_Worth). The Home Depot decided to close all Home Depot Landscape Supply stores in late 2007.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-24)

In September 2005, Home Depot Direct launched its online home-furnishings store, **10 Crescent Lane**, shortly followed by the launch of **Paces Trading Company**, its online lighting store. In mid 2006, the Home Depot acquired **Home Decorators Collection**, which was placed as an additional brand under its Home Depot Direct division.

In 2006, the Home Depot acquired [Hughes Supply](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hughes_Supply) the largest home retailer in the United States for $3.2 billion.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-25) Hughes Supply was integrated into The Home Depot Supply to better serve business-to-business customers.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-26) The Home Depot Supply rebranded under the new name [HD Supply](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HD_Supply) in January 2007.[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-27) Five months later The Home Depot sold HD Supply to a consortium of three [private equity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_equity) firms, [The Carlyle Group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Carlyle_Group), [Bain Capital](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bain_Capital) and [Clayton, Dubilier and Rice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clayton,_Dubilier_and_Rice) (with each agreeing to buy a one-third stake in the division).[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-28)

2007 – Present

On January 2, 2007, the Home Depot and [Robert Nardelli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Nardelli) mutually agreed on Nardelli's resignation as CEO after a six-year tenure. Nardelli resigned amid complaints over his heavy-handed management and whether his pay package of $123.7 million (excluding [stock option](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stock_option)grants) over the previous five years was excessive, considering the stock's poor performance versus its competitor [Lowe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowe%27s)'s. His [severance package](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Severance_package) of $210 million was criticized because when the stock went down, his pay went up.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-Corporate_news_release-29)[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-Business_Week_article-30)

Center aisle of a Home Depot store in 2014.

His successor, [Frank Blake](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Blake), previously served as the company's vice chairman of the board and executive vice president. Blake agreed to a much more conservative compensation package than Nardelli, that is very heavily dependent upon the success of the company. Although a longtime deputy to Nardelli at GE and Home Depot, Blake was said to lack Nardelli's hard edge and instead preferred to make decisions by consensus. Indeed, Blake repudiated many of his predecessor's strategies, and it has been reported that the two men have not spoken since Nardelli departed Home Depot.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-Corporate_news_release-29)[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-31)

In 2008 and 2009, with the downturn in the housing market, The Home Depot announced the layoff of several thousand associates, as well as the closing of 54 stores nationwide, including the entire EXPO Design Center chain.[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-32) Associates at EXPO were allowed to re-apply for Home Depot jobs after the [layoffs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Layoff), and did not lose any tenure if hired back. In the year of February 2009, sales totaled $71.288 billion, more than $20 billion down from the peak of two years earlier due to the sale of HD Supply and falling revenue at the retained business. In 2012, they proceeded to close the big-box style stores that they had in China, however smaller stores that specialized in custom products and focused on more intimate interactions between customers and associates remain open there.[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-33)[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-34)

In 2013, The Home Depot established two large distribution centers in [Atlanta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlanta) and [Los Angeles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_Angeles).[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-35)

In August 2014, it was announced that Frank Blake would step down as CEO and would be replaced by 57-year-old Craig Menear. The change occurred on November 1, 2014. Blake would continue with the company as chairman. Menear joined The Home Depot in 1997, and served in various management and vice-presidential positions, until 2003, including merchandising vice president of hardware, merchandising vice president of the Southwest Division, and divisional merchandise manager of the Southwest Division. He subsequently served as senior vice president of merchandising from August 2003 to April 2007. He then served as an executive vice president of merchandising from April 2007 to February 2014. Until becoming CEO, Menear served as president of U.S. Retail from February 2014 to November 1, 2014.[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-36)

The company had a data breach in September 2014.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-37) One major reason for the data breach was the practice of entering credit card numbers directly into computers at the service-desk and pro-desk, and in specialty departments including flooring, kitchen cabinets, appliances, and millwork, rather than using POS credit card terminals directly. The practice was stopped, and Home Depot offered a year of free credit monitoring through AllClearID for any customers who requested it. There were also reports of credit card numbers being stolen when used to make purchases on Homedepot.com.

On July 22, 2015, Home Depot acquired [Interline Brands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interline_Brands) from P2 Capital Partners, [Goldman Sachs'](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldman_Sachs) private equity arm, and the management of Interline Brands for $1.6 billion.[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-38) Interline Brands became fully integrated with The Home Depot in August 2016 with the Interline Brands website merging with The Home Depot website. The subsidiaries of Interline Brands are now companies of The Home Depot.[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Home_Depot#cite_note-39)

**Sherwin-Williams**

Acquisitions in the 1980s included the popular Dutch Boy line of paints and its manufacturing facilities, as well as Dupli-Color Products Company, which specialized in automotive paints. In 1984, to reach markets outside the continental United States, the company entered into a partnership known as BAPCO with C-I-L, Inc. of Canada, a subsidiary of England's Imperial Chemical Industries PLC. The new concern was eventually acquired in its entirety by C-I-L, as Sherwin-Williams gradually divested its chemical operations.

During this time, sales of house paints decreased, due largely to the use of alternative surface finishes, such as pre-finished aluminum and plastic surfaces, in the construction of homes. Sherwin-Williams responded to this trend by going after market share and substantially increasing its advertising budget from $4 million in 1989 to $125 million in 1990. This strategy was well-timed, as increasingly popular discount and home decorating chains that catered to the do-it-yourself market preferred to rely on one or two major suppliers that sold national brands and provided national distribution, rather than hundreds of smaller, local paint companies.

Moreover, in 1990 Sherwin-Williams added the well-known Krylon and Illinois Bronze lines of aerosol paints to its holdings. And with the 1990 purchase of the architectural coatings business of DeSoto, Inc., Sherwin-Williams gained its biggest chunk of market share. It paid $67 million for the business, which traced its roots back to 1910 and eventually became as one of the largest paint manufacturers in the country, supplying private label paints for such chains as Sears and Home Depot. The addition of DeSoto made Sherwin-Williams the world's largest supplier of custom paints for the private-label market. The following year, the company purchased the Cuprinol brand name of premium stains, liquid sealers, and other coatings products from the Darworth Company of Connecticut, as well as two coatings business units from Cook Paint and Varnish Company.

The acquisitions paid off well for Sherwin-Williams. According to a 1992 article in*Business Week,* industry sales fell 0.2 percent in 1991, due to national economic recession, but revenues at Sherwin-Williams were up 2.9 percent, excluding acquisitions. For the first two quarters of 1991, in fact, the company's profits climbed 23 percent to $68 million on sales of $1.37 billion. As Sherwin-Williams celebrated its 125th anniversary that year, it had become one of only a few companies to lead its chosen industry for more than a century.

By 1993, Sherwin-Williams was reporting earnings of $165 million on sales of $2.9 billion, and its balance sheet was almost debt-free. Indeed, in the 15 years since Breen took over, revenues more than doubled, while profits increased almost tenfold. In new product development, the company introduced Ever-Clean, a premium latex interior wall paint with superior stain resistance and washability characteristics. The new paint was launched in 1994 as part of a national advertising campaign which was the largest in the company's history. Also that year, Sherwin-Williams acquired the assets of The Old Quaker Paint Company for an undisclosed amount. This purchase brought Sherwin-Williams into the residential construction market of southern California.

To support the company's growth and keep its operations running at top performance, Sherwin-Williams had a software designer help develop an automated control system for its distribution centers. Known as the Automated Warehouse Control System (AWCS), the system became fully operational in all its distribution centers in 1994. Using bar-code technology and portable radio frequency, it significantly improved the efficiency and accuracy of processing orders. For example, workers received electronic orders via a hand-held machine incorporating a radio, a computer terminal, and a scanner. The computer sent orders ranking each tasks priority and recalculated the list each time a task was completed. When trucks were unloading at the warehouse, the computer determined where to put the goods based on what space was free at that moment, eliminating the need to hold a particular slot empty until a truck was unloaded.

The early and mid-1990s saw a decline in new housing starts and thus proved challenging to the construction and building materials industries. Sherwin-Williams, along with most companies competing in that business sector, felt the effects in the form of reduced stock prices. Nevertheless, Sherwin-Williams remained in a strong financial position; having avoided long-term debt and gained market share, the company was able to respond effectively to the shifting economic environment and was still intent on serving as "America's Paint Company."