

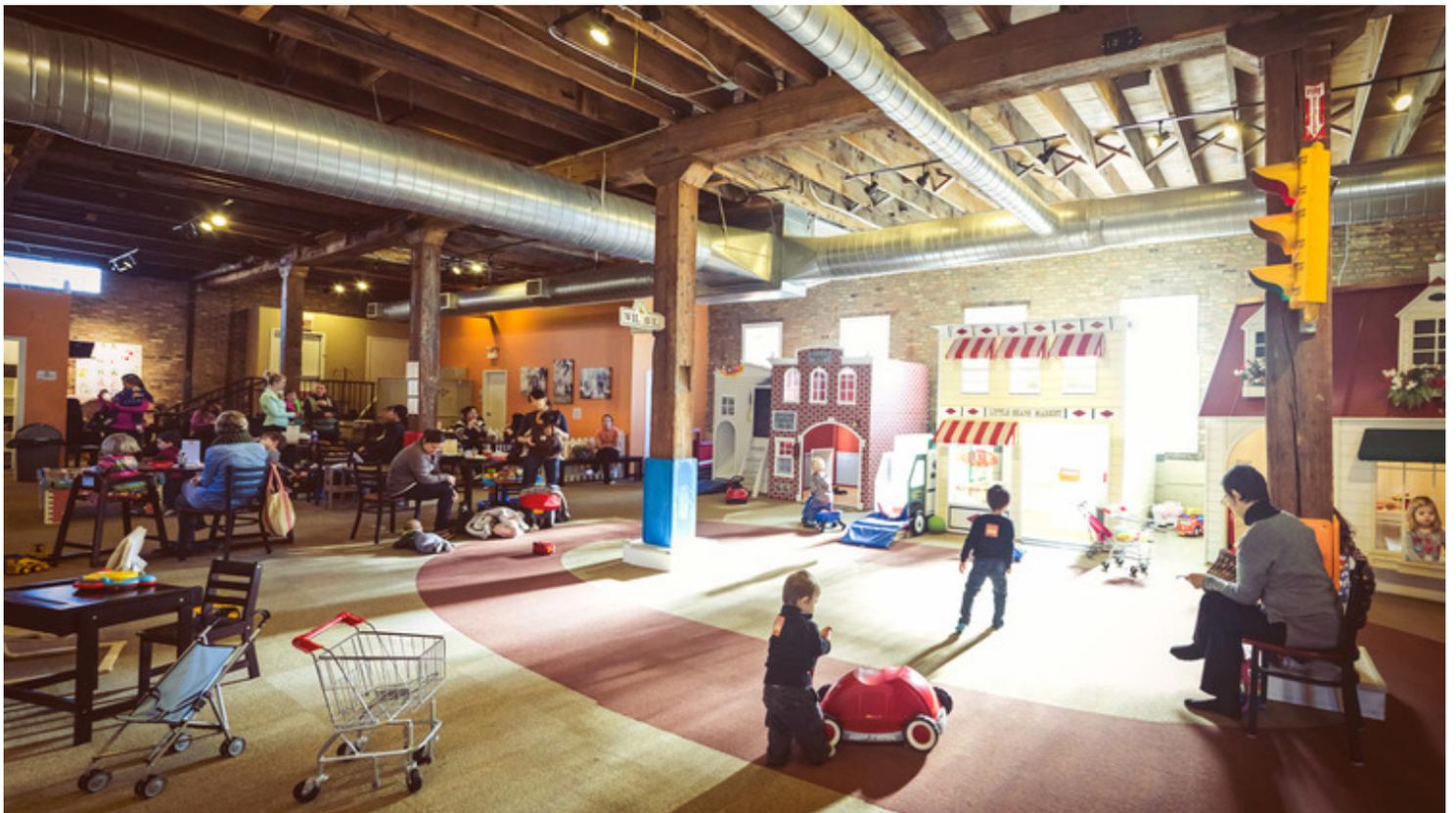
Birthday party ideas

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Whether you're on a shoestring budget or the sky's the limit, we have birthday party ideas your kids (and their friends) will love

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By Samantha Lande, Elisa Drake and Heather Lalley Posted: Tuesday July 22 2014



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Photograph: Thomas M Kubik

Little Beans Cafe

The Actors Gymnasium at Noyes Cultural Arts Center

Instead of running away to join the circus, kids can head to this Evanston studio that often collaborates with Lookingglass Theatre on acrobatic productions. The Circus Arts party package, for ages eight and up, includes instruction on two circus tricks such as juggling, unicycling, trapeze or tightwire. Imaginastics, for younger kids, has the skilled and silly entertainers focusing on tumbling, gymnastics and storytelling. If it's good enough for David Schwimmer, it's good enough for your budding Bozo. *\$375 includes 60 minutes of instructional time and 30 minutes for cake (bring your own) for up to 15 children; pay \$75 for up to five more kids.*

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Evanston

Bubbles Academy

If you dream it, Bubbles can create it. This whimsical spot will take care of all of your party needs—you just need to take care of the food and goodie bags. If your child dreams of a superhero, the staff can create a party around that theme. Princesses and pirates? No problem. The talented instructors can lead sing-alongs and art classes, or you can opt for open play with bubbles, balls and building blocks. Packages start at \$650, \$550 if you are registered for a class.

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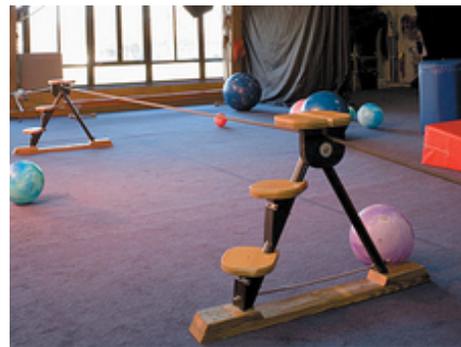
Lincoln Park

Children's Museum of Immigration at the Swedish American Museum

Party kids get private access during normal hours to this Andersonville kids' museum, where they can board a replica steamer ship on a "trip" to America, "milk" the wooden cow and row a Viking ship. Celebrate with your own spread in a small adjacent classroom (setup and cleanup are your job). Museum staff will lead a themed craft and game (Pippi Longstocking, Viking or Pioneer) for an additional \$5 per kid. *\$175 (members \$125) for three hours for up to 20 kids (30 guest max).*

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Andersonville



Easel Art Studio

Critics' pick

Your budding Picasso will love this Wicker Park kid-focused art studio. A party here allows the little ones to rotate through age-appropriate crafts—fully smocked, of course. The team will work with you beforehand to approve the projects. You can choose to order in food from anywhere or take advantage of the discount Easel has with Piece pizza. Once art time is over, there are toys and a stand-up sandbox for even more fun. No need for goodie bags because kids get to take home their art. Parties cost \$300 plus \$12 per kid for the projects, and that includes the entire space, teachers, goodie bags and, if you choose, face painting or temporary tattoos.



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Bucktown

Frozen Ropes

Little sluggers love parties at this huge indoor baseball training center, where they practice swinging in the batting cages, play guess-your-speed radar and hit the field with coaches for game play (bring your own gloves and bats). *\$475 World Series party gets 18 players 30 minutes in the batting cages, an hour in the full stadium and 30 minutes in the party room. \$10 per additional kid.*



[Read more](#)

Little Beans

Critics' pick

This cute play space modeled after a town with its own grocery store, fire station and auto shop also hosts full-service birthday parties. For \$550, you can get the standard package that includes two hours of fun in the playspace and three "Bean Buddies" that will do all of the setup and cleanup. If you want to add to the party, the team can help with food and decorations and even balloon animals or music. For summer parties, check out the back deck full of water toys and a private ice cream shop.

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Lincoln Park

Heritage Littles

If you're looking for a fun space with a relaxed vibe, this new Lincoln Avenue spot should be your pick. Part bike shop, part photo shop and part event space, it's one of the more unique picks. The party space has a special perk: a built-in milk and cookie bar with plenty of cookies. The rental fee is \$325 for two hours for 15 kids including setup and cleanup. The rest is open to what you make it when you bring your own decor and food. Of course, the staff is willing to help with ideas and even supply face painters or parties in a box (courtesy of Land of Nod) for an additional fee.

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West Lakeview

Historic Wagner Farm

Experience a real “living farm” (read: not a petting zoo) with a party at this Glenview Park District spot. The Lil Farmers package (for ages 3–6) offers crafts like birdhouse painting and games such as Pin the Spots on the Cow, plus face time with sheep, draft horses and cows. Splurge on a horse-drawn wagon ride, \$125 per 30 minutes. *\$270 for 90-minute parties for 10–25 kids, \$305 package for older kids includes craft supplies, games and two staff helpers.*

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Glenview

iCream

Young molecular gastronomists scream over this new-age ice-cream shop that fuses science with sweetness. Guests choose from more than 30 ice-cream flavors (from traditional vanilla and chocolate to burnt sugar and cream soda), tons of mix-ins (gum balls, fresh fruit, Oreos) and color options (kids get a major kick from eating orange-tinted mint ice cream), then go behind the counter to help churn their frozen treats on-the-spot with the help of liquid nitrogen. *\$150 shuts down iCream for an hour-long private party, plus \$5 per guest for the ice cream. Groups larger than 20 should reserve at least 90 minutes.*

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Wicker Park

Inside Out Art Studio

Master mask maker Jeff Semmerling opens his Lincoln Square art studio to partyers ages seven and up to make their own creations (from a kid-sized basic form) or other crafts (puppets, sculpture, jewelry). You’re welcome to bring your own food and party decorations. *\$200 for 15 kids max.*

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Portage Park

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