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### Integrated circuit and method of forming the same

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#### Abstract

An integrated circuit includes a first and second active region, a first insulating region, and a first and second contact. The first and second active region extend in a first direction, and are on a first level. The first active region includes a first and second drain/source region. The second active region includes a third drain/source region. The first insulating region is over the first drain/source region. The first contact overlaps the third drain/source region, is electrically coupled to the third drain/source region and is located on a second level. The second contact includes a first and second portion. The first portion overlaps the first and second drain/source. The second portion overlaps the first contact, the first and third drain/source region, and the first insulating region, and is electrically coupled to the first portion, and electrically insulated from the first drain/source region.

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**Background/Summary**

**PRIORITY CLAIM** (1) The present application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 18/065,299, filed Dec. 13, 2022, now U.S. Pat. No. 11,868,699, issued Jan. 9, 2024, which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 17/326,811, filed May 21, 2021, now U.S. Pat. No. 11,550,986, issued Jan. 10, 2023, which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 16/659,270, filed Oct. 21, 2019, now U.S. Pat. No. 11,048,849, issued Jun. 29, 2021, which claims the benefit

## BACKGROUND

(1) The recent trend in miniaturizing integrated circuits (ICs) has resulted in smaller devices which consume less power yet provide more functionality at higher speeds. The miniaturization process has also resulted in stricter design and manufacturing specifications as well as reliability challenges. Various electronic design automation (EDA) tools generate, optimize and verify standard cell layout designs for integrated circuits while ensuring that the standard cell layout design and manufacturing specifications are met.

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## Description

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

(1) Aspects of the present disclosure are best understood from the following detailed description when read with the accompanying figures. It is noted that, in accordance with the standard practice in the industry, various features are not drawn to scale. In fact, the dimensions of the various features may be arbitrarily increased or reduced for clarity of discussion.

(2) FIG. 1 is a circuit diagram of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(3) FIG. 2 is a diagram of a layout design of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(4) FIGS. 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D are diagrams of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(5) FIG. 4 is a circuit diagram of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(6) FIG. 5 is a diagram of a layout design of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(7) FIGS. 6A, 6B, 6C and 6D are diagrams of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(8) FIG. 7A is a diagram of a layout design of a set of contacts of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(9) FIG. 7B is a diagram of a layout design of a set of contacts of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(10) FIG. 7C is a top view of a diagram of a set of contacts of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(11) FIG. 7D is a top view of a diagram of a set of contacts of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(12) FIG. 8 is a flowchart of a method of forming or manufacturing an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(13) FIG. 9 is a flowchart of a method of generating a layout design of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(14) FIG. 10 is a block diagram of a system for designing and manufacturing an IC layout design, in accordance with some embodiments.

(15) FIG. 11 is a block diagram of an IC manufacturing system, and an IC manufacturing flow associated therewith, in accordance with at least one embodiment of the present disclosure.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

(16) The following disclosure provides different embodiments, or examples, for implementing features of the provided subject matter. Specific examples of components, materials, values, steps, arrangements, or the like, are described below to simplify the present disclosure. These are, of course, merely examples and are not limiting. Other components, materials, values, steps, arrangements, or the like, are contemplated. For example, the formation of a first feature over or on

a second feature in the description that follows may include embodiments in which the first and second features are formed in direct contact, and may also include embodiments in which additional features may be formed between the first and second features, such that the first and second features may not be in direct contact. In addition, the present disclosure may repeat reference numerals and/or letters in the various examples. This repetition is for the purpose of simplicity and clarity and does not in itself dictate a relationship between the various embodiments and/or configurations discussed.

(17) Further, spatially relative terms, such as “beneath,” “below,” “lower,” “above,” “upper” and the like, may be used herein for ease of description to describe one element or feature's relationship to another element(s) or feature(s) as illustrated in the figures. The spatially relative terms are intended to encompass different orientations of the device in use or operation in addition to the orientation depicted in the figures. The apparatus may be otherwise oriented (rotated 90 degrees or at other orientations) and the spatially relative descriptors used herein may likewise be interpreted accordingly.

(18) In accordance with some embodiments, an integrated circuit includes a first active region, a second active region and a third active region, a first contact and a second contact.

(19) In some embodiments, the first active region and the second active region are separated from each other in a first direction, are located on a first level and are in a substrate. In some embodiments, the third active region is in the substrate, located on the first level and is separated from the second active region in a second direction different from the first direction. In some embodiments, the first contact extends in the second direction, overlaps the first active region, and is located on a second level different from the first level.

(20) In some embodiments, the second contact extends in the first direction and the second direction, and is located on a third level different from the first level and the second level. In some embodiments, the second contact overlaps the first contact, the second active region and the third active region.

(21) In some embodiments, the integrated circuit further includes a first insulating region over the second active region and below the second contact, thereby electrically insulating the second active region from the second contact.

(22) In some embodiments, by positioning the first insulating region between the second contact and the second active region, and extending the second contact in each of the first direction X and the second direction Y (e.g., 2 directions), the second contact can provide additional routing resources below upper metallization levels (e.g., M0, M1, etc.) for the integrated circuit. In some embodiments, by providing additional routing resources below upper metallization levels (e.g., M0, M1, etc.), the use of the upper metallization levels (e.g., M0, M1, etc.) can be reduced or the upper metallization levels (e.g., M0, M1, etc.) can be utilized as additional routing resources resulting in an integrated circuit having at least a reduced pitch, a smaller area or a smaller standard cell than other approaches.

#### Integrated Circuit

(23) FIG. 1 is a circuit diagram of an integrated circuit **100**, in accordance with some embodiments. In some embodiments, integrated circuit **100** is a 2-2 AND OR INVERT (AOI) circuit. A 2-2 AOI circuit is used for illustration, other types of circuits including other types of AOI circuits are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(24) Integrated circuit **100** includes P-type metal oxide semiconductor (PMOS) transistors **P1**, **P2**, **P3** and **P4** and N-type metal oxide semiconductor (NMOS) transistors **N1**, **N2**, **N3** and **N4**.

(25) A gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P1** is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive an input signal **A1**. A gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N1** is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive input signal **A1**. In some embodiments, the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P1** is coupled to the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N1**.

(26) A gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P2** is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured

- to receive an input signal B1. A gate terminal of NMOS transistor N3 is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive input signal B1. In some embodiments, the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P2 is coupled to the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N3.
- (27) A gate terminal of PMOS transistor P3 is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive an input signal A2. A gate terminal of NMOS transistor N2 is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive input signal A2. In some embodiments, the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P3 is coupled to the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N2.
- (28) A gate terminal of PMOS transistor P4 is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive an input signal B2. A gate terminal of NMOS transistor N4 is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive input signal B2. In some embodiments, the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P4 is coupled to the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N4. In some embodiments, at least input signal A1, A2, B1 or B2 is a logically low signal or a logically high signal.
- (29) A source terminal of PMOS transistor P2 and a source terminal of PMOS transistor P4 are coupled to the voltage supply VDD. In some embodiments, the source terminal of PMOS transistor P2 and the source terminal of PMOS transistor P4 are coupled together.
- (30) A drain terminal of PMOS transistor P2, a source terminal of PMOS transistor P1, a drain terminal of PMOS transistor P4, and a source terminal of PMOS transistor P3 are coupled to each other.
- (31) A drain terminal of PMOS transistor P1, a drain terminal of PMOS transistor P3, a drain terminal of NMOS transistor N1 and a drain terminal of NMOS transistor N3 are coupled to each other, and are configured as an output node OUT1.
- (32) A source terminal of NMOS transistor N1 and a drain terminal of NMOS transistor N2 are coupled to each other. A source terminal of NMOS transistor N3 and a drain terminal of NMOS transistor N4 are coupled to each other.
- (33) A source terminal of NMOS transistor N2 and a source terminal of NMOS transistor N4 are each coupled to a reference voltage supply VSS. In some embodiments, the source terminal of NMOS transistor N2 and the source terminal of NMOS transistor N4 are coupled together.
- (34) Other circuits, other types of transistors, and/or quantities of transistors are within the scope of various embodiments. For example, in some embodiments, integrated circuit 100 includes other types of AOI logic circuits, such as a 2-1 AOI logic circuit. Other values of at least input signal A1, A2, B1 or B2 are within the scope of various embodiments.

#### Layout Design of an Integrated Circuit

- (35) FIG. 2 is a diagram of a layout design 200 of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments. Layout design 200 is a layout diagram of integrated circuit 100 of FIG. 1.
- (36) Components that are the same or similar to those in each of FIGS. 2-11 are given the same reference numbers, and detailed description thereof is thus omitted.
- (37) Layout design 200 is usable to manufacture integrated circuit 100 of FIG. 1 or integrated circuit 300 of FIGS. 3A-3D.
- (38) Layout design 200 includes active region layout patterns 202a and 202b (collectively referred to as a “set of active region layout patterns 202”) extending in a first direction X. Active region layout patterns 202a, 202b of the set of active region layout patterns 202 are separated from one another in a second direction Y different from the first direction X. The set of active region layout patterns 202 is usable to manufacture a corresponding set of active regions 302 (FIGS. 3A-3B) of integrated circuit 300. In some embodiments, active region layout pattern 202a, 202b of the set of active region layout patterns 202 is usable to manufacture corresponding active regions 302a, 302b of the set of active regions 302 (FIGS. 3A-3B) of integrated circuit 300. In some embodiments, the set of active region layout patterns 202 is referred to as an oxide diffusion (OD) region which defines the source or drain diffusion regions of integrated circuit 300.
- (39) In some embodiments, active region layout pattern 202a of the set of active region layout

patterns **202** is usable to manufacture source and drain regions of NMOS transistors **N1**, **N2**, **N3** and **N4**, and active region layout pattern **202b** of the set of active region layout patterns **202** are usable to manufacture source and drain regions of PMOS transistors **P1**, **P2**, **P3** and **P4** of integrated circuit **100** (FIG. **1**).

(40) In some embodiments, the set of active region layout patterns **202** is located on a first level. In some embodiments, the first level corresponds to an active level or an OD level of one or more of layout designs **200** or **500** (FIG. **2** or **5**) or integrated circuit **300** or **600** (FIGS. **3A-3D** or **6A-6D**).

(41) Other configurations or quantities of patterns in the set of active region layout patterns **202** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(42) Layout design **200** further includes at least gate layout pattern **204a**, **204b**, **204c**, **204d**, **204e**, **204f** or **204g** (collectively referred to as a “set of gate layout patterns **204**”) extending in the second direction Y. The set of gate layout patterns **204** of layout design **200** and integrated circuit **300** have a contact poly pitch (CPP) of **6**.

(43) Each of the gate layout patterns of the set of gate layout patterns **204** is separated from an adjacent gate layout pattern of the set of gate layout patterns **204** in the first direction X by a first pitch (not labelled). The set of gate layout patterns **204** is usable to manufacture a corresponding set of gates **304** (FIGS. **3A-3D**) of integrated circuit **300**. In some embodiments, gate layout pattern **204a**, **204b**, **204c**, **204d**, **204e**, **204f**, **204g** of the set of gate layout patterns **204** is usable to manufacture corresponding gate **304a**, **304b**, **304c**, **304d**, **304e**, **304f**, **304g** of the set of gates **304** (FIGS. **3A-3D**) of integrated circuit **300**. In some embodiments, at least gate layout pattern **204a**, **204d** or **204g** is a dummy gate layout pattern. In some embodiments, a dummy gate layout pattern is usable to manufacture a corresponding dummy gate. In some embodiments, at least gate **304a**, **304d** or **304g** is a dummy gate. In some embodiments, a dummy gate is a gate structure of a non-functional transistor device.

(44) The set of gate layout patterns **204** are positioned on a first portion of a second level. In some embodiments, the first portion of the second level is different from the first level. In some embodiments, the first portion of the second level corresponds to a POLY layer of one or more of layout designs **200** or **500** (FIG. **2** or **5**) or integrated circuit **300** or **600** (FIGS. **3A-3D** or **6A-6D**).

(45) The set of active region layout patterns **202** is below the set of gate layout patterns **204**.

(46) For clarity, gate layout patterns **204b**, **204c**, **204e** and **204f** are labeled with corresponding input signals **B2**, **B1**, **A1** and **A2** of FIG. **1**.

(47) Gate layout pattern **204b** is usable to manufacture the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P4** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N4** of FIG. **1**. Gate layout pattern **204c** is usable to manufacture the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P2** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N3** of FIG. **1**. Gate layout pattern **204e** is usable to manufacture the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P1** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N1** of FIG. **1**. Gate layout pattern **204f** is usable to manufacture the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P3** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N2** of FIG. **1**.

(48) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of patterns in the set of gate layout patterns **204** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(49) Layout design **200** further includes at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **210a**, **210b**, **210c**, **210d**, **210e**, **210f**, **210g**, **210h**, **210i** or **210j** (collectively referred to as a “set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210**”) extending in the second direction Y. At least one of the layout patterns of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** overlaps the set of active region layout patterns **202**. The layout patterns of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** are separated from an adjacent layout pattern of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** in at least the first direction X or the second direction Y. In some embodiments, the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** is located on a second portion of the second level. In some embodiments, the second portion of the second level corresponds to a metal over diffusion one (MD1) level of one or more of layout designs **200** or **500** (FIG. **2** or **5**) or integrated circuit **300** or

**600** (FIGS. 3A-3D or 6A-6D). In some embodiments, the first portion of the second level is the same as the second portion of the second level. In some embodiments, the second level includes an MD1 portion and a POLY portion.

(50) The set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** is usable to manufacture a corresponding set of contacts **310** (FIGS. 3A-3D) of integrated circuit **300**. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout patterns **210a**, **210b**, **210c**, **210d**, **210e**, **210f**, **210g**, **210h**, **210i**, **210j** of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** is usable to manufacture corresponding contacts **310a**, **310b**, **310c**, **310d**, **310e**, **310f**, **310g**, **310h**, **310i**, **310j** of the set of contacts **310** (FIGS. 3A-3D) of integrated circuit **300**.

(51) In some embodiments, each of the layout patterns of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** have a regular layout pattern. In some embodiments, regular layout patterns are layout patterns that are aligned in at least a single direction with respect to each other. In some embodiments, regular layout patterns are layout patterns aligned in at least the first direction X or the second direction Y.

(52) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of patterns in the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(53) Layout design **200** further includes at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **220a** or **220b** (collectively referred to as a “set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220**”). The set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** extends in the first direction X and the second direction Y. In some embodiments, set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** is referred to as a two dimensional (2D) layout pattern. In some embodiments, the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** has an L-shape. In some embodiments, the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** has one or more of a U-shape similar to a set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** of FIG. 5, a W shape similar to a set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **700A** of FIG. 7A, a T-shape similar to a set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **700B** of FIG. 7B, an O-shape (not shown), or the like. Other shapes in the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(54) Metal over diffusion layout pattern **220a** extends in the second direction Y. Metal over diffusion layout pattern **220b** extends in the first direction X. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout patterns **220a** and **220b** are portions of a same continuous layout pattern (e.g., set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220**).

(55) In some embodiments, the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** includes two or more separate or discontinuous layout patterns that are separated from each other in at least the first direction X or the second direction Y.

(56) At least one of the layout patterns of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** overlaps at least one of the set of active region layout patterns **202** or at least one of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210**. Metal over diffusion layout pattern **220a** overlaps metal over diffusion layout pattern **210i** and active region layout pattern **202b**. Metal over diffusion layout pattern **220b** overlaps metal over diffusion layout pattern **210c** and active region layout pattern **202a**.

(57) The set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** is located on a third level. In some embodiments, the third level is different from the first level and the second level. In some embodiments, the third level is different from the first portion of the second level and the second portion of the second level.

(58) In some embodiments, the third level corresponds to a metal over diffusion two (MD2) level of one or more of layout designs **200** or **500** (FIG. 2 or 5) or integrated circuit **300** or **600** (FIGS. 3A-3D or 6A-6D). In some embodiments, the MD2 level is above the MD1 level or the POLY1 level. The set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** is usable to manufacture a corresponding set of contacts **320** (FIGS. 3A-3D) of integrated circuit **300**.

(59) In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout patterns **220a**, **220b** of the set of metal over

diffusion layout patterns **220** is usable to manufacture corresponding contact portions **320a**, **320b** of the set of contacts **320** (FIGS. 3A-3D) of integrated circuit **300**.

(60) In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **210i** or a portion of metal over diffusion layout pattern **220a** is usable to manufacture the drain terminal of PMOS transistor P2 of FIG. 1 and the drain terminal of PMOS transistor P3 of FIG. 1.

(61) In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **210c** or a portion of metal over diffusion layout pattern **220b** is usable to manufacture the drain terminal of NMOS transistor N1 of FIG. 1.

(62) In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **220a** or **220b** is usable to manufacture one or more drain or source terminals of at least NMOS transistor N1, N2, N3 or N4 or PMOS transistor P1, P2, P3 or P4 of FIG. 1.

(63) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels, shapes or quantities of patterns in the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(64) Layout design **200** further includes at least conductive feature layout pattern **230a** or **230b** (collectively referred to as a “set of conductive feature layout patterns **230**”) extending in the first direction X. The set of conductive feature layout patterns **230** is usable to manufacture a corresponding set of conductive structures **330** (FIGS. 3A-3D) of integrated circuit **300**. In some embodiments, conductive feature layout patterns **230a**, **230b** of the set of conductive feature layout patterns **230** is usable to manufacture corresponding conductive structures **330a**, **330b** of the set of conductive structures **330** (FIGS. 3A-3D) of integrated circuit **300**.

(65) The set of conductive feature layout patterns **230** overlap at least the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** or the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220**. The set of conductive feature layout patterns **230** are over the set of active region layout patterns **202**.

(66) Conductive feature layout pattern **230a** overlaps metal over diffusion layout patterns **210b** and **210c**, and metal over diffusion layout pattern **220b**. Conductive feature layout pattern **230a** is over active region layout pattern **202a**. In some embodiments, conductive feature layout pattern **230a** extends between gate layout pattern **204c** and **204e**.

(67) Conductive feature layout pattern **230b** overlaps metal over diffusion layout patterns **210f**, **210g**, **210h**, **210i** and **210j**, and metal over diffusion layout pattern **220a**. Conductive feature layout pattern **230b** is over active region layout pattern **202b**. In some embodiments, conductive feature layout pattern **230b** extends between gate layout pattern **204b** and **204g**.

(68) The set of conductive feature layout patterns **230** is located on a fourth level. In some embodiments, the fourth level is different from at least the first level, the second level or the third level. In some embodiments, the fourth level corresponds to a metal zero (M0) layer of one or more of layout designs **200** or **500** (FIG. 2 or 5) or integrated circuit **300** or **600** (FIGS. 3A-3D or 6A-6D). Other levels are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(69) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of patterns in the set of conductive feature layout patterns **230** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(70) Layout design **200** further includes one or more power rail layout patterns **232a** or **232b** (collectively referred to as a “set of power rail layout patterns **232**”) extending in the first direction X, and being located on the fourth level. The set of power rail layout patterns **232** is usable to manufacture a set of power rails **332** of integrated circuit **300** (FIGS. 3A-3D) or set of power rails **632** of integrated circuit **600** (FIGS. 6A-6D). In some embodiments, power rail layout patterns **232a**, **232b** of the set of power rail layout patterns **232** is usable to manufacture corresponding power rails **332a**, **332b** of the set of power rails **332** (FIGS. 3A-3D) of integrated circuit **300**. In some embodiments, power rail layout patterns **232a**, **232b** of the set of power rail layout patterns **232** is usable to manufacture corresponding power rails **632a**, **632b** of the set of power rails **632** (FIGS. 6A-6D) of integrated circuit **600**.

(71) The set of power rail layout patterns **232** overlaps one or more layout patterns of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210**. In some embodiments, power rail layout pattern **232a**



overlaps at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **210a** or **210d**. In some embodiments, power rail layout pattern **232b** overlaps at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **210e**, **210g** or **210i**.

(72) In some embodiments, the set of power rails **332** or **632** is configured to provide a first supply voltage of a voltage supply VDD or a second supply voltage of a reference voltage supply VSS to the integrated circuit, such as integrated circuit **300** or **600**. In some embodiments, each power rail layout pattern of the set of power rail layout patterns **232** is located along a corresponding edge of a cell of layout design **200**. In some embodiments, layout design **300** corresponds to a standard cell.

(73) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of patterns in the set of power rail layout patterns **232** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(74) Layout design **200** further includes at least via layout pattern **240a**, **240b**, **240c**, **240d**, **240e**, **240f**, **240g**, **240h** or **240i** (collectively referred to as a “set of via layout patterns **240**”). The set of via layout patterns **240** is usable to manufacture a corresponding set of vias **340** (FIGS. 3A-3D). In some embodiments, via layout patterns **240a**, **240b**, **240c**, **240d**, **240e**, **240f**, **240g**, **240h**, **240i** of the set of via layout patterns **240** is usable to manufacture corresponding vias **340a**, **340b**, **340c**, **340d**, **340e**, **340f**, **340g**, **340h**, **340i** of the set of vias **340** (FIGS. 3A-3D) of integrated circuit **300**.

(75) In some embodiments, the set of via layout patterns **240** are between at least the set of conductive feature layout patterns **230** or the set of power rail layout patterns **232** and at least the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** or **220**.

(76) Set of via layout patterns **240** are positioned at a via over diffusion (VD) level or a tall via over diffusion (VDT) of one or more of layout designs **200** or **500** (FIG. 2 or 5) or integrated circuit **300** or **600** (FIGS. 3A-3D or 6A-6D).

(77) In some embodiments, the VD level is between the M0 level and the MD2 level. In some embodiments, the VDT level is between the M0 level and the MD1 level. In some embodiments, the MD2 level is above the MD1 level or the POLY1 level. In some embodiments, the VDT level is between the fourth level and the second portion of the second level (e.g., MD1). In some embodiments, the VD level is between the fourth level and the third level (e.g., MD2). Other levels are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(78) Via layout patterns **240a**, **240d** are between power rail layout pattern **232a** and corresponding metal over diffusion layout patterns **210a**, **210d**. Via layout patterns **240e**, **240g** are between power rail layout pattern **232b** and corresponding metal over diffusion layout patterns **210e**, **210g**.

(79) Via layout pattern **240b** is between conductive feature layout pattern **230a** and metal over diffusion layout pattern **210b**. Via layout pattern **240c** is between conductive feature layout pattern **230a** and metal over diffusion layout pattern **220b**. Via layout pattern **240f**, **240h**, **240i** is between conductive feature layout pattern **230b** and corresponding metal over diffusion layout pattern **210f**, **210h**, **210j**.

(80) In some embodiments, at least one layout pattern of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** is not included in layout design **200**; therefore, a corresponding via layout pattern of the set of via layout patterns **240**, over the removed layout pattern of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220**, is positioned at the VDT level.

(81) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of patterns in the set of via layout patterns **240** are within the scope of the present disclosure. For example, in some embodiments, the set of via layout patterns **240** are positioned between the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** and the set of gate layout patterns **204**, and therefore the set of via layout patterns **240** are usable to manufacture a corresponding set of vias **340** that are configured to provide an electrical connection between the set of gates **304** and the set of contacts **220**.

(82) In some embodiments, by extending the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** in the first direction X and the second direction Y (e.g., 2 directions) and by positioning the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** to overlap at least the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210**, the set of gate layout patterns **204** or the set of active regions **202**, the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** provide additional routing resources in the second direction Y and

located below upper metallization layers (e.g., M0, M1, etc.) in layout design **200**. By providing routing resources below upper metallization levels (e.g., M0, M1, etc.), the use of the upper metallization layers (e.g., M0, M1, etc.) can be reduced or the upper metallization layers (e.g., M0, M1, etc.) can be utilized as additional routing resources resulting in layout design **200** having at least a reduced pitch, a smaller area or a smaller standard cell than other approaches.

(83) Layout design **200** or **500** (FIG. 5) have a height H1 (not labelled) in the second direction Y. In some embodiments, layout design **200** and **500** (FIG. 5) are referred to as a single height standard cell.

#### Integrated Circuit

(84) FIGS. **3A**, **3B**, **3C** and **3D** are diagrams of an integrated circuit **300**, in accordance with some embodiments.

(85) FIG. **3A** is a cross-sectional view of an integrated circuit **300** corresponding to layout design **200** as intersected by plane A-A', in accordance with some embodiments. FIG. **3B** is a cross-sectional view of an integrated circuit **300** corresponding to layout design **200** as intersected by plane B-B', in accordance with some embodiments. FIG. **3C** is a cross-sectional view of an integrated circuit **300** corresponding to layout design **200** as intersected by plane C-C', in accordance with some embodiments. FIG. **3D** is a cross-sectional view of an integrated circuit **300** corresponding to layout design **200** as intersected by plane D-D', in accordance with some embodiments.

(86) Integrated circuit **300** is manufactured by layout design **200**. Integrated circuit **300** is an embodiment of a portion of integrated circuit **100**.

(87) Structural relationships including alignment, lengths and widths, as well as configurations of integrated circuit **300** are similar to the structural relationships and configurations of layout design **200** of FIG. 2, and similar detailed description will not be described in FIGS. **3A-3D** for brevity.

(88) Integrated circuit **300** includes a well region **301a**, a well region **301b**, the set of active regions **302**, a substrate **303**, the set of gates **304**, the set of contacts **310**, the set of contacts **320**, the set of conductive features **330**, the set of rails **332**, the set of vias **340** and an insulating region **360**.

(89) Well region **301a** and well region **301b** are in substrate **303**. Each of well region **301a** and well region **301b** is located on at least a first level of integrated circuit **300**, and extends in at least the first direction X or the second direction Y. In some embodiments, well region **301a** and well region **301b** are adjacent to each other, and are separated from each other in the second direction Y. In some embodiments, well region **301a** and **301b** are separated from each other by an insulating layer (not shown).

(90) In some embodiments, well region **301a** includes Si, Ge, SiGe, InAs, InGaAs, InAlAs, InP, or the like. In some embodiments, well region **301b** includes Si, Ge, SiGe, InAs, InGaAs, InAlAs, InP, or the like. In some embodiments, substrate **303** includes SiGe, Si, Ge, InAs, InGaAs, InAlAs, InP, or the like.

(91) Well region **301a** of integrated circuit **300** is a first type of well. In some embodiments, the first type of well is an N-type of well. In some embodiments, the first type of well is a P-type of well.

(92) Well region **301b** of integrated circuit **300** is a second type of well different from the first type of well. In some embodiments, the second type of well is a P-type of well. In some embodiments, the second type of well is an N type of well.

(93) Other quantities or configurations of the well region **301a** or the well region **301b** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(94) The set of active regions **302** extends in the second direction Y. The set of active regions **302** is located on the first level of integrated circuit **300**. The set of active regions **302** includes a sub-set of active regions **302a** and a sub-set of active regions **302b**.

(95) The sub-set of active regions **302a** includes at least active region **302a1**, **302a2**, **302a3**, **302a4**, **302a5** or **302a6**. Each of the active regions **302a1**, **302a2**, **302a3**, **302a4**, **302a5** and **302a6** of the

sub-set of active regions **302a** is separated from an adjacent active region of the sub-set of active regions **302a** in the first direction X.

(96) Active regions **302a1**, **302a2**, **302a3**, **302a4**, **302a5** and **302a6** of the sub-set of active regions **302a** are embedded in the well region **301a** of integrated circuit **300**. Active regions **302a1**, **302a2**, **302a3**, **302a4**, **302a5** and **302a6** include dopants of a first dopant type. In some embodiments, the first dopant type is an N-type dopant. In some embodiments, the first dopant type is a P-type dopant.

(97) In some embodiments, active regions **302a1**, **302a2**, **302a3**, **302a4**, **302a5** and **302a6** include N-type dopants as the first dopant type, and well region **301a** is a P-type of well. In some embodiments, active regions **302a1**, **302a2**, **302a3**, **302a4**, **302a5** and **302a6** include P-type dopants as the first dopant type, and well region **301a** is an N-type of well.

(98) The sub-set of active regions **302b** includes at least active region **302b1**, **302b2**, **302b3**, **302b4**, **302b5** or **302b6**.

(99) Each of the active regions **302b1**, **302b2**, **302b3**, **302b4**, **302b5** and **302b6** of the sub-set of active regions **302b** is separated from an adjacent active region of the sub-set of active regions **302b** in the first direction X.

(100) Active regions **302b1**, **302b2**, **302b3**, **302b4**, **302b5** and **302b6** of the sub-set of active regions **302a** are embedded in the well region **301b** of integrated circuit **300**. Active regions **302b1**, **302b2**, **302b3**, **302b4**, **302b5** and **302b6** include dopants of a second dopant type different from the first dopant type.

(101) In some embodiments, the second dopant type is a P-type dopant and the first dopant type is an N-type dopant. In some embodiments, the second dopant type is an N-type dopant and the first dopant type is a P-type dopant.

(102) In some embodiments, active regions **302b1**, **302b2**, **302b3**, **302b4**, **302b5** and **302b6** include P-type dopants as the second dopant type, and well region **301b** is an N-type of well. In some embodiments, active regions **302b1**, **302b2**, **302b3**, **302b4**, **302b5** and **302b6** include N-type dopants as the second dopant type, and well region **301b** is a P-type of well.

(103) In some embodiments, active region **302a1** corresponds to the source of NMOS transistor **N4**. In some embodiments, active region **302a2** corresponds to the drain of NMOS transistor **N4** and the source of NMOS transistor **N3**. In some embodiments, active region **302a3** corresponds to the drain of NMOS transistor **N3**.

(104) In some embodiments, active region **302a4** corresponds to the drain of NMOS transistor **N1**. In some embodiments, active region **302a5** corresponds to the drain of NMOS transistor **N2** and the source of NMOS transistor **N1**. In some embodiments, active region **302a6** corresponds to the source of NMOS transistor **N2**.

(105) In some embodiments, active region **302b1** corresponds to the source of PMOS transistor **P4**. In some embodiments, active region **302b2** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistor **P2** and the drain of PMOS transistor **P4**. In some embodiments, active region **302b3** corresponds to the source of PMOS transistor **P2**. In some embodiments, active region **302b4** corresponds to the source of PMOS transistor **P1**. In some embodiments, active region **302b5** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistor **P1** and the drain of PMOS transistor **P3**. In some embodiments, active region **302b6** corresponds to the source of PMOS transistor **P3**.

(106) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of active regions in the set of active regions **302** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(107) The set of gates **304** includes at least gate **304a**, **304b**, **304c**, **304d**, **304e**, **304f** or **304g**. Each of gates **304a**, **304b**, **304c**, **304d**, **304e**, **304f** and **304g** of the set of gates **304** extends in the second direction Y. The set of gates **304** is positioned on a first portion of a second level of integrated circuit **300**.

(108) Gate **304b** of the set of gates **304** corresponds to the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P4** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N4** of FIG. 1. Gate **304c** of the set of gates **304** corresponds

to the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P2 and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N3 of FIG. 1. Gate **304e** of the set of gates **304** corresponds to the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P1 and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N1 of FIG. 1. Gate **304f** of the set of gates **304** corresponds to the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P3 and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N2 of FIG. 1. In some embodiments, at least gate **304a**, **304d** or **304g** corresponds to a dummy gate of a corresponding non-functional transistor.

(109) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of gates in the set of gates **304** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(110) The set of contacts includes at least contact **310a**, **310b**, **310c**, **310d**, **310e**, **310f**, **310g**, **310h**, **310i** or **310j**. Contacts **310a**, **310b**, **310c**, **310d**, **310e**, **310f**, **310g**, **310h**, **310i**, **310j** of the set of contacts **310** extend in the second direction Y, and overlap corresponding active regions **302a1**, **302a3**, **302a4**, **302a6**, **302b1**, **302b2**, **302b3**, **302b4**, **302b5**, **302b6**. Contacts **310a**, **310b**, **310c**, **310d**, **310e**, **310f**, **310g**, **310h**, **310i**, **310j** of the set of contacts **310** are electrically coupled to corresponding active regions **302a1**, **302a3**, **302a4**, **302a6**, **302b1**, **302b2**, **302b3**, **302b4**, **302b5**, **302b6**. In some embodiments, the set of contacts **310** is located on the second portion of the second level.

(111) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of contacts in the set of contacts **310** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(112) The set of contacts **320** extends in the first direction X and the second direction Y. In some embodiments, set of contacts **320** is referred to as a 2D structure since contact portions **320a** and **320b** extend in at least two different directions (e.g., first direction X and the second direction Y). In some embodiments, the set of contacts **320** has an L-shape. In some embodiments, the set of contacts **320** has one or more of a U-shape similar to a set of contacts **620** of FIGS. 6A-6D, a W-shape similar to a set of contacts **700C** of FIG. 7C, a T-shape similar to a set of contacts **700D** of FIG. 7D, an O-shape (not shown), or the like. Other shapes or numbers of portions in the set of contacts **320** or **620** (FIG. 6A-6D) are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(113) The set of contacts **320** includes a contact portion **320a** and a contact portion **320b**.

(114) At least one of the contact portions of the set of contacts **320** overlaps at least one of the set of active regions **302** or at least one of the set of contacts **310**.

(115) Contact portion **320a** of the set of contacts **320** extends in the second direction Y. Contact portion **320b** of the set of contacts **320** extends in the first direction X. In some embodiments, contact portion **320a** and contact portion **320b** are part of the same continuous contact structure. In some embodiments, the set of contacts **320** includes two or more separate or discontinuous contact portions that are separated from each other in at least the first direction X or the second direction Y.

(116) Contact portion **320a** of the set of contacts **320** overlaps contact **310i** of the set of contacts **310** and an insulating region **360**. Contact portion **320a** overlaps active regions **302b5** and **302a5**. In some embodiments, contact portion **320a** is directly coupled to contact **310i** of the set of contacts **310**. In some embodiments, contact portion **320a** is electrically coupled to active region **302b5** by contact **310i**. In some embodiments, contact portion **320a** is electrically isolated from active region **302a5** by the insulating region **360**.

(117) Contact portion **320b** of the set of contacts **320** overlaps contact **310c** of the set of contacts **310** and insulating region **360**. Contact portion **320b** overlaps active regions **302a4** and **302a5**. In some embodiments, contact portion **320b** is directly coupled to contact **310c** of the set of contacts **310**. In some embodiments, contact portion **320b** is electrically coupled to active region **302a4** by contact **310c**. In some embodiments, contact portion **320b** is electrically isolated from active region **302a5** by the insulating region **360**. The set of contacts **320** is located on the third level.

(118) In some embodiments, at least one contact in the set of contacts **320** or **620** (FIGS. 6A-6D) includes one or more layers of a conductive material. In some embodiments, the conductive material includes Tungsten, Cobalt, Ruthenium, Copper, or the like or combinations thereof.

(119) In some embodiments, at least one contact portion in the set of contacts **320** or **620** (FIGS.

**6A-6D**) has a height or thickness (not labelled) in a third direction Z that is less than a height or thickness (not labelled) in the third direction Z of one or more vias in the set of vias **340** or **640** (FIGS. **6A-6D**) in the VDT level. In some embodiments, the third direction Z is different from the first direction X and the second direction Y.

(120) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of contacts in the set of contacts **320** are within the scope of the present disclosure. For example, in some embodiments, contact portion **320a**, contact portion **320b** or other contacts similar to contact portion **320a** or **320b** in the set of contacts **320** overlap or extend over at least another contact in the MD1 level or a gate in the POLY level of integrated circuit **300** or **600** (FIGS. **6A-6D**).

(121) Insulating region **360** is configured to insulate one or more elements in integrated circuit **300** from each other. Insulating region **360** is over active region **302a5**. Insulating region **360** is positioned between contact portions **320a** and **320b** and active region **302a5** thereby electrically insulating contact portions **320a** and **320b** from active region **302a5**. In some embodiments, insulating region **360** is part of a set of insulating layers **370**. In some embodiments, at least insulating region **360** or the set of insulating layers **370** is located on the second portion of the second level.

(122) The set of insulating layers **370** extend in the first direction X and the second direction Y. In some embodiments, the set of insulating layers **370** are configured to electrically insulate at least one member of the set of active regions **302**, the set of gates **304**, the set of contacts **310**, the set of contacts **320**, the set of conductive structures **330**, the set of power rail **332** or the set of vias **340** from at least another one member of the set of active regions **302**, the set of gates **304**, the set of contacts **310**, the set of contacts **320**, the set of conductive structures **330**, the set of power rail **332** or the set of vias **340**.

(123) In some embodiments, insulating region **360** or the set of insulating layers **370** is over active regions of the set of active regions **302** different from active region **302a5**, and insulating region **360** or the set of insulating layers **370** electrically isolate the corresponding one or more other active regions from other overlying layers (e.g., contacts in the MD2 layer). For example, in some embodiments, insulating region **360** or the set of insulating layers **370** can replace one or more contacts of the set of contacts **310** or **610** (FIGS. **6A-6D**), similar to insulating region **360** shown in FIG. **3A**.

(124) In some embodiments, insulating region **360** or the set of insulating layers **370** are positioned over one or more gates of the set of gates **304** and insulating region **360** or the set of insulating layers **370** electrically isolate the corresponding one or more gates from other overlying layers (e.g., contacts in the MD2 layer).

(125) In some embodiments, at least insulating region **360**, **660** or **662** (FIGS. **6A-6D**) or a layer of the set of insulating layers **370** or **670** (FIGS. **6A-6D**) includes one or more layers of a dielectric material. In some embodiments, the dielectric material includes SiOCN, SiO.sub.2, SiOC, or the like or combinations thereof.

(126) In some embodiments, at least insulating region **360**, **660** or **662** (FIGS. **6A-6D**) or a layer of the set of insulating layers **370** or **670** (FIGS. **3A-3D** & **6A-6D**) has a height or thickness (not labelled) in the third direction Z that is equal to a height or thickness (not labelled) in the third direction Z of one or more contacts in the set of contacts **310** or **610** (FIGS. **6A-6D**) in the MD1 metallization layer.

(127) Other configurations, arrangements or quantities for insulating region **360** or the set of insulating layers **370** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(128) The set of conductive structures **330** overlap at least the set of contacts **310** or **320**. The set of conductive structures **330** are over the set of active regions **302a**. In some embodiments, the set of conductive structures **330** are configured to provide an electrical connection from at least an active region of the set of active regions **302** or a gate of the set of gates **304** to at least another active region of the set of active regions **302** or gate of the set of gates **304**. In some embodiments, the set

of conductive structures **330** is located on the fourth level.

(129) Conductive structure **330a** overlaps contacts **310b** and **310c**, and contact portion **320b**. Conductive structure **330a** is over active regions **302a3** and **302a4**. In some embodiments, conductive structure **330a** extends between gates **304c** and **304e**.

(130) Conductive structure **330b** overlaps contacts **310f**, **310g**, **310h**, **310i** and **310j**, and contact portion **320a**. Conductive structure **330b** is over sub-set of active regions **302b**. Conductive structure **330b** is over active regions **302b2**, **302b3**, **302b4**, **302b5** and **302b6**. In some embodiments, conductive structure **330b** extends between gates **304b** and **304g**.

(131) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of structures in the set of conductive structures **330** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(132) The set of power rails **332** extend in the first direction X. In some embodiments, the first set of power rails **332** are located on the fourth level. In some embodiments, power rail **332a** or **632a** is configured to provide the second supply voltage of the reference voltage supply VSS to integrated circuit **300** or **600**. In some embodiments, power rail **332b** or **632b** is configured to provide the first supply voltage of the voltage supply VDD to integrated circuit **300** or **600**. In some embodiments, power rail **332a** or **632a** is configured to provide the first supply voltage of the voltage supply VDD, and power rail **332b** or **632b** is configured to provide the second supply voltage of the reference voltage supply VSS. Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of power rails in the set of power rails **332** or **632** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(133) In some embodiments, via **340a**, **340b**, **340d**, **340e**, **340f**, **340g**, **340h** or **340i** of the set of vias **340** are positioned at the VDT level. In some embodiments, via **340c** of the set of vias **340** are positioned at the VD level. In some embodiments, a height in a third direction Z of at least via **340a**, **340b**, **340d**, **340e**, **340f**, **340g**, **340h** or **340i** of the set of vias **340** is the same as a height in the third direction Z of at least another via of via **340a**, **340b**, **340d**, **340e**, **340f**, **340g**, **340h** or **340i** of the set of vias **340**. In some embodiments, a height of at least via **340a**, **340b**, **340d**, **340e**, **340f**, **340g**, **340h** or **340i** of the set of vias **340** is different from a height of via **340c** of the set of vias **340**. In some embodiments, a height or thickness (not labelled) in the third direction Z of one or more vias in the set of vias **340** or **640** (FIGS. 6A-6D) in the VDT level is equal to a sum of a height or thickness (not labelled) in the third direction Z of at least one contact portion in the set of contacts **320** or **620** (FIGS. 6A-6D) and a height or thickness (not labelled) in the third direction Z of one or more vias in the set of vias **340** or **640** (FIGS. 6A-6D) in the VD level.

(134) In some embodiments, the active region **302b1** (e.g., source of PMOS transistor P4 of FIG. 1) and the active region **302b3** (e.g., the source of PMOS transistor P2 of FIG. 1) are electrically coupled to the voltage supply VDD. For example, in some embodiments, active region **302b1**, **302b3** is electrically coupled to corresponding contact **310e**, **310g** of the set of contacts **310**, and corresponding contact **310e**, **310g** is electrically coupled to power rail **332b** of the set of power rails **320** by corresponding via **340e**, **340g** of the set of vias **340**. In some embodiments, power rail **332b** is coupled to voltage supply VDD.

(135) In some embodiments, the active region **302a1** (e.g., the source of NMOS transistor N4 of FIG. 1) and the active region **302a6** (e.g., the source of NMOS transistor N2 of FIG. 1) are electrically coupled to the reference voltage supply VSS. For example, in some embodiments, active region **302a1**, **302a6** is electrically coupled to corresponding contact **310a**, **310d** of the set of contacts **310**, and corresponding contact **310a**, **310d** is electrically coupled to power rail **332a** of the set of power rails **320** by corresponding via **340a**, **340d** of the set of vias **340**. In some embodiments, power rail **332a** is coupled to the reference voltage supply VSS.

(136) In some embodiments, conductive structure **330b** of the set of conductive structures **330** is configured to provide an electrical connection between at least a portion (e.g., drain) of a first transistor (e.g., PMOS transistors P2 and P4), a portion (e.g., source) of a second transistor (e.g., PMOS transistor P1) and a portion (e.g., source) of a third transistor (e.g., PMOS transistor P3).

For example, in some embodiments, the active region **302b2** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistors **P2** and **P4**, the active region **302b4** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistor **P1**, the active region **302b6** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistor **P3**, and are electrically coupled together by at least conductive structure **330b**. In some embodiments, active region **302b2**, **302b4**, **302b6** is electrically coupled to corresponding contact **310f**, **310h**, **310j** of the set of contacts **310**, and corresponding contact **310f**, **310h**, **310j** of the set of contacts **310** is electrically coupled to conductive structure **330b** by corresponding vias **340f**, **340h**, **340i** of the set of vias **340**.

(137) In some embodiments, at least contact portions **320a** and **320b** of the set of contacts **320** are configured to provide an electrical connection between each of a portion (e.g., drain) of at least transistor (e.g., PMOS transistors **P1** and **P3**), a portion (e.g., drain) of another transistor (e.g., NMOS transistor **N1**), and a portion (e.g., drain) of yet another transistor (e.g., NMOS transistor **N3**). For example, in some embodiments, the active region **302b5** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistors **P1** and **P3**, the active region **302a4** corresponds to the drain of NMOS transistor **N1**, and the active region **302a3** corresponds to the drain of NMOS transistor **N3**, and are electrically coupled together by at least contact portions **320a** and **320b** of the set of contacts **320**.

(138) In some embodiments, active region **302b5** is electrically coupled to contact **310i** of the set of contacts **310**, contact **310i** of the set of contacts **310** is electrically coupled to contact portions **320a** and **320b** of the set of contacts **320**, contact portions **320a** and **320b** of the set of contacts **320** are electrically coupled to contact **310c** of the set of contacts **310**, and contact **310c** of the set of contacts **310** is electrically coupled to active region **302a4**. In some embodiments, contact portions **320a** and **320b** of the set of contacts **320** are further electrically coupled to conductive structure **330a** of the set of conductive structures **330** by via **340c** of the set of vias **340**, conductive structure **330a** is electrically coupled to contact **310b** by via **340b** of the set of vias **340**, and contact **310b** of the set of contacts **310** is electrically coupled to active region **302a3**.

(139) In some embodiments, contact portions **320a** and **320b** of the set of contacts **320** are electrically insulated (e.g., not electrically coupled) with active region **302a5** by insulating region **360**, and therefore active regions **302b5**, **302a3** and **302a4** are electrically insulated (e.g., not electrically coupled) with active regions **302a5** by insulating region **360**.

(140) In some embodiments, by at least providing an electrical connection between active regions **302b5**, **302a3** and **302a4** of the set of active regions **302** using contact portions **320a** and **320b** of the set of contacts **320** in the MD2 layer, or electrically insulating active region **302a5** from active regions **302b5**, **302a3** and **302a4** using insulating region **360**, other metallization levels (e.g., M0, M1, etc.) can be utilized for additional routing resources resulting in integrated circuit **300** having at least a reduced pitch, a smaller area or a smaller standard cell than other approaches.

#### Integrated Circuit

(141) FIG. **4** is a circuit diagram of an integrated circuit **400**, in accordance with some embodiments. In some embodiments, integrated circuit **400** is a 2-2 AOI circuit. A 2-2 AOI circuit is used for illustration, other types of circuits including other types of AOI circuits are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(142) Integrated circuit **400** is a variation of integrated circuit **100**. In comparison with integrated circuit **100** of FIG. **1**, integrated circuit **400** further includes PMOS transistors **P5**, **P6**, **P7** and **P8** and NMOS transistors **N5**, **N6**, **N7** and **N8**.

(143) A gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P5** is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive an input signal **A1'**. A gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N5** is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive input signal **A1'**. In some embodiments, input signal **A1** is equal to input signal **A1'**. In some embodiments, at least the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P1**, the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P5**, the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N1** or the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N5** is coupled to at least another of the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P1**, the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P5**, the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N1** or the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N5**.

(144) A gate terminal of PMOS transistor P6 is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive an input signal B1'. A gate terminal of NMOS transistor N7 is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive input signal B1'. In some embodiments, input signal B1 is equal to input signal B1'. In some embodiments, at least the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P2, the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P6, the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N3 or the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N7 is coupled to at least another of the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P2, the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P6, the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N3 or the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N7.

(145) A gate terminal of PMOS transistor P7 is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive an input signal A2'. A gate terminal of NMOS transistor N6 is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive input signal A2'. In some embodiments, input signal A2 is equal to input signal A2'. In some embodiments, at least the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P3, the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P7, the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N2 or the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N6 is coupled to at least another of the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P3, the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P7, the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N2 or the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N6.

(146) A gate terminal of PMOS transistor P8 is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive an input signal B2'. A gate terminal of NMOS transistor N8 is configured as an input node (not labelled) configured to receive input signal B2'. In some embodiments, input signal B2 is equal to input signal B2'. In some embodiments, at least the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P4, the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P8, the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N4 or the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N8 is coupled to at least another of the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P4, the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P8, the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N4 or the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N8. In some embodiments, at least input signal A1, A1', A2, A2', B1, B1', B2 or B2' is a logically low signal or a logically high signal.

(147) A source terminal of PMOS transistor P2, a source terminal of PMOS transistor P4, a source terminal of PMOS transistor P6 and a source terminal of PMOS transistor P8 are coupled to the voltage supply VDD. In some embodiments, the source terminal of PMOS transistor P2, the source terminal of PMOS transistor P4, the source terminal of PMOS transistor P6 and the source terminal of PMOS transistor P8 are coupled together.

(148) A drain terminal of PMOS transistor P2, a source terminal of PMOS transistor P1, a drain terminal of PMOS transistor P4, a source terminal of PMOS transistor P3, a drain terminal of PMOS transistor P6, a source terminal of PMOS transistor P5, a drain terminal of PMOS transistor P8, a source terminal of PMOS transistor P7 are coupled to each other.

(149) A drain terminal of PMOS transistor P1, a drain terminal of PMOS transistor P3, a drain terminal of NMOS transistor N1, a drain terminal of NMOS transistor N3, a drain terminal of PMOS transistor P5, a drain terminal of PMOS transistor P7, a drain terminal of NMOS transistor N5 and a drain terminal of NMOS transistor N7 are coupled to each other, and are configured as an output node OUT2.

(150) A source terminal of NMOS transistor N1 and a drain terminal of NMOS transistor N2 are coupled to each other. A source terminal of NMOS transistor N3 and a drain terminal of NMOS transistor N4 are coupled to each other.

(151) A source terminal of NMOS transistor N5 and a drain terminal of NMOS transistor N6 are coupled to each other. A source terminal of NMOS transistor N7 and a drain terminal of NMOS transistor N8 are coupled to each other.

(152) A source terminal of NMOS transistor N2, a source terminal of NMOS transistor N4, a source terminal of NMOS transistor N6, a source terminal of NMOS transistor N8 are each coupled to a reference voltage supply VSS. In some embodiments, the source terminal of NMOS transistor N2, the source terminal of NMOS transistor N4, the source terminal of NMOS transistor N6 and the source terminal of NMOS transistor N8 are coupled together.



(153) Other circuits, other types of transistors, and/or quantities of transistors are within the scope of various embodiments. For example, in some embodiments, integrated circuit **400** includes other types of AOI logic circuits, such as a 2-1 AOI logic circuit. Other values of at least input signal **A1**, **A1'**, **A2**, **A2'**, **B1**, **B1'**, **B2** or **B2'** are within the scope of various embodiments.

#### Layout Design of an Integrated Circuit

(154) FIG. **5** is a diagram of a layout design **500** of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(155) Layout design **500** is a variation of layout design **200** (FIG. **2**). For example, layout design **500** illustrates an example where a set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** has a U-shape.

(156) Layout design **500** is usable to manufacture an integrated circuit similar to integrated circuit **400** of FIG. **4** or integrated circuit **600** of FIGS. **6A-6D**.

(157) Layout design **500** includes a set of active region layout patterns **502**, the set of power rail layout patterns **232**, a set of gate layout patterns **504**, a set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **510**, a set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520**, a set of conductive feature layout patterns **530**, and a set of via layout patterns **540**.

(158) In comparison with layout design **200** of FIG. **2**, the set of active region layout patterns **502** of layout design **500** replace the set of active region layout patterns **202**. The set of active region layout patterns **502** are similar to the set of active region layout patterns **202**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(159) Set of active region layout patterns **502** includes at least active region layout pattern **502a** or **502b**. Active region layout patterns **502a** and **502b** of the set of active region layout patterns **502** are similar to corresponding active region layout patterns **202a** and **202b** of the set of active region layout patterns **202**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(160) The set of active region layout patterns **502** is usable to manufacture a corresponding set of active regions **602** (FIGS. **6A-6B**) of integrated circuit **600**. In some embodiments, active region layout pattern **502a**, **502b** of the set of active region layout patterns **202** is usable to manufacture corresponding active regions **602a**, **602b** of the set of active regions **602** (FIGS. **6A-6B**) of integrated circuit **600**.

(161) In some embodiments, active region layout pattern **502a** of the set of active region layout patterns **502** is usable to manufacture source and drain regions of NMOS transistors **N1**, **N2**, **N3**, **N4**, **N5**, **N6**, **N7** and **N8**, and active region layout pattern **502b** of the set of active region layout patterns **502** are usable to manufacture source and drain regions of PMOS transistors **P1**, **P2**, **P3**, **P4**, **P5**, **P6**, **P7** and **P8** of integrated circuit **400** (FIG. **4**).

(162) Other configurations or quantities of patterns in the set of active region layout patterns **502** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(163) In comparison with layout design **200** of FIG. **2**, the set of gate layout patterns **504** of layout design **500** replaces the set of gate layout patterns **204**. The set of gate layout patterns **504** of layout design **500** and integrated circuit **600** have a CPP of 9. The set of gate layout patterns **504** are similar to the set of gate layout patterns **204**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(164) Set of gate layout patterns **504** includes at least gate layout pattern **504a**, **504b**, **504c**, **504d**, **504e**, **504f**, **504g**, **504h**, **504i** or **504j**. At least one of gate layout pattern **504a**, **504b**, **504c**, **504d**, **504e**, **504f**, **504g**, **504h**, **504i** or **504j** of the set of gate layout patterns **504** is similar to at least one of gate layout pattern **204a**, **204b**, **204c**, **204d**, **204e**, **204f** or **204g** of the set of gate layout patterns **204**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(165) The set of gate layout patterns **504** is usable to manufacture a corresponding set of gates **604** (FIGS. **6A-6D**) of integrated circuit **600**. In some embodiments, gate layout patterns **504a**, **504b**, **504c**, **504d**, **504e**, **504f**, **504g**, **504h**, **504i**, **504j** of the set of gate layout patterns **504** are usable to manufacture corresponding gates **604a**, **604b**, **604c**, **604d**, **604e**, **604f**, **604g**, **604h**, **604i**, **604j** of the set of gates **604** (FIGS. **6A-6D**) of integrated circuit **600**. In some embodiments, at least gate layout pattern **504a** or **504j** is a dummy gate layout pattern. In some embodiments, at least gate **604a** or

**604j** is a dummy gate.

(166) Gate layout pattern **504b** is usable to manufacture the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P4** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N4** of FIG. 4. Gate layout pattern **504c** is usable to manufacture the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P2** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N3** of FIG. 4. Gate layout pattern **504d** is usable to manufacture the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P6** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N7** of FIG. 4. Gate layout pattern **504e** is usable to manufacture the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P8** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N8** of FIG. 4. Gate layout pattern **504f** is usable to manufacture the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P3** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N2** of FIG. 4. Gate layout pattern **504g** is usable to manufacture the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P1** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N1** of FIG. 4. Gate layout pattern **504h** is usable to manufacture the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P5** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N5** of FIG. 4. Gate layout pattern **504i** is usable to manufacture the gate terminal of PMOS transistor **P7** and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor **N6** of FIG. 4.

(167) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of patterns in the set of gate layout patterns **504** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(168) In comparison with layout design **200** of FIG. 2, the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **510** replaces the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210**. The set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **510** are similar to the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(169) Set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **510** includes at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510a**, **510b**, **510c**, **510d**, **510e**, **510f**, **510g**, **510h**, **510i**, **510j**, **510k**, **510l**, **510m** or **510n**. At least one of metal over diffusion layout pattern **510a**, **510b**, **510c**, **510d**, **510e**, **510f**, **510g**, **510h**, **510i**, **510j**, **510k**, **510l**, **510m** or **510n** of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **510** is similar to at least one of metal over diffusion layout pattern **210a**, **210b**, **210c**, **210d**, **210e**, **210f**, **210g**, **210h**, **210i** or **210j** of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(170) The set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **510** is usable to manufacture a corresponding set of contacts **610** (FIGS. 6A-6D) of integrated circuit **600**. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout patterns **510a**, **510b**, **510c**, **510d**, **510e**, **510f**, **510g**, **510h**, **510i**, **510j**, **510k**, **510l**, **510m**, **510n** of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **510** are usable to manufacture corresponding contacts **610a**, **610b**, **610c**, **610d**, **610e**, **610f**, **610g**, **610h**, **610i**, **610j**, **610k**, **610l**, **610m**, **610n** of the set of contacts **610** (FIGS. 6A-6D) of integrated circuit **600**.

(171) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of patterns in the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **510** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(172) In comparison with layout design **200** of FIG. 2, the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** replaces the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220**. The set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** are similar to the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(173) In comparison with layout design **200** of FIG. 2, the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** has a U-shape. In some embodiments, the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** has one or more of an L-shape similar to a set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** of FIG. 2, a W-shape similar to a set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **700A** of FIG. 7A, a T-shape similar to a set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **700B** of FIG. 7B, an O-shape (not shown), or the like. Other shapes in the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(174) Set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** includes at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **520a**, **520b** or **520c**.

(175) In comparison with layout design **200** of FIG. 2, metal over diffusion layout patterns **520a** and **520b** replace corresponding metal over diffusion layout patterns **220a** and **220b** of FIG. 2, and

similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(176) Metal over diffusion layout pattern **520a** and **520c** extend in the second direction Y. Metal over diffusion layout pattern **520b** extends in the first direction X. Metal over diffusion layout pattern **520a** is separated from metal over diffusion layout pattern **520c** in the first direction X. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout pattern **520b** extends from metal over diffusion layout pattern **520a** to metal over diffusion layout pattern **520c**. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout patterns **520a**, **520b** and **520c** are portions of a same continuous layout pattern (e.g., set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520**).

(177) In some embodiments, the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** includes two or more separate or discontinuous layout patterns that are separated from each other in at least the first direction X or the second direction Y.

(178) At least one of the layout patterns of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** overlaps at least one of the set of active region layout patterns **502** or at least one of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **510**.

(179) Metal over diffusion layout pattern **520a** overlaps metal over diffusion layout pattern **510m** and active region layout patterns **502a** and **502b**. Metal over diffusion layout pattern **520b** overlaps metal over diffusion layout pattern **510d** and is over active region layout pattern **502a**. Metal over diffusion layout pattern **520c** overlaps metal over diffusion layout pattern **510k** and active region layout patterns **502a** and **502b**.

(180) The set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** is usable to manufacture a corresponding set of contacts **620** (FIGS. **6A-6D**) of integrated circuit **600**. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout patterns **520a**, **520b**, **520c** of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** are usable to manufacture corresponding contact portions **620a**, **620b**, **620c** of the set of contacts **620** (FIGS. **6A-6D**) of integrated circuit **600**.

(181) In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510a** is usable to manufacture the source terminal of NMOS transistor **N4** of FIG. **4**. In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510b** is usable to manufacture the drain terminal of NMOS transistor **N3** of FIG. **4** and the drain terminal of NMOS transistor **N7** of FIG. **4**. In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510c** is usable to manufacture the source terminal of NMOS transistor **N2** of FIG. **4** and the source terminal of NMOS transistor **N8** of FIG. **4**. In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510d** is usable to manufacture the drain terminal of NMOS transistor **N1** of FIG. **4** and the drain terminal of NMOS transistor **N5** of FIG. **4**. In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510e** is usable to manufacture the source terminal of NMOS transistor **N6** of FIG. **4**.

(182) In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510f** is usable to manufacture the drain terminal of PMOS transistor **P4** of FIG. **4**. In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510g** is usable to manufacture the source terminal of PMOS transistor **P4** of FIG. **4** and the source terminal of PMOS transistor **P2** of FIG. **4**. In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510h** is usable to manufacture the drain terminal of PMOS transistor **P2** of FIG. **4** and the drain terminal of PMOS transistor **P6** of FIG. **4**.

(183) In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510i** is usable to manufacture the source terminal of PMOS transistor **P6** of FIG. **4** and the source terminal of PMOS transistor **P8** of FIG. **4**. In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510j** is usable to manufacture the drain terminal of PMOS transistor **P8** of FIG. **4** and the source terminal of PMOS transistor **P3** of FIG. **4**. In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510l** is usable to manufacture the source terminal of PMOS transistor **P1** of FIG. **4** and the source terminal of PMOS transistor **P5** of FIG. **4**. In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510n** is usable to manufacture the source terminal of PMOS transistor **P7** of FIG. **4**.

(184) In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern **510k** or a portion of metal over diffusion layout pattern **520c** is usable to manufacture the drain terminal of PMOS transistor

P3 of FIG. 4 and the drain terminal of PMOS transistor P1 of FIG. 4. In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern 510m or a portion of metal over diffusion layout pattern 520a is usable to manufacture the drain terminal of PMOS transistor P5 of FIG. 4 and the drain terminal of PMOS transistor P7 of FIG. 4.

(185) In some embodiments, at least metal over diffusion layout pattern 220a, 220b or 220c is usable to manufacture portions of one or more drain or source terminals of at least NMOS transistor N1, N2, N3, N4, N5, N6, N7 or N8 or PMOS transistor P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7 or P8 of FIG. 4.

(186) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of patterns in the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns 520 are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(187) In comparison with layout design 200 of FIG. 2, the set of conductive feature layout patterns 530 replaces the set of conductive feature layout patterns 230. The set of conductive feature layout patterns 530 are similar to the set of conductive feature layout patterns 230, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(188) Set of conductive feature layout patterns 530 includes at least conductive feature layout patterns 530a or 530b. Conductive feature layout pattern 530a, 530b replaces corresponding conductive feature layout pattern 230a, 230b of FIG. 2, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(189) In some embodiments, conductive feature layout pattern 530a extends between gate layout pattern 504c and 504g. In some embodiments, conductive feature layout pattern 530b extends from gate layout pattern 504a to gate layout pattern 504j.

(190) In some embodiments, conductive feature layout pattern 530a overlaps metal over diffusion layout patterns 510b, 510c, 520b and 520c. In some embodiments, conductive feature layout pattern 530b overlaps metal over diffusion layout patterns 510f, 510g, 510h, 510i, 510j, 510k, 510l, 510m, 510n, 520a and 520c.

(191) The set of conductive feature layout patterns 530 is usable to manufacture a corresponding set of conductive features 630 (FIGS. 6A-6D) of integrated circuit 600. In some embodiments, conductive feature layout patterns 530a and 530b of the set of conductive feature layout patterns 530 are usable to manufacture corresponding conductive structures 630a and 630b of the set of conductive structures 630 (FIGS. 6A-6D) of integrated circuit 600.

(192) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of patterns in the set of conductive feature layout patterns 530 are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(193) In comparison with layout design 200 of FIG. 2, the set of via layout patterns 540 replaces the set of via layout patterns 240. The set of via layout patterns 540 are similar to the set of via layout patterns 240, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(194) Set of via layout patterns 540 includes at least via layout pattern 540a, 540b, 540c, 540d, 540e, 540f, 540g, 540h, 540i, 540j, 540k or 540l. At least one of via layout pattern 540a, 540b, 540c, 540d, 540e, 540f, 540g, 540h, 540i, 540j, 540k or 540l of the set of via layout patterns 540 is similar to at least one of via layout pattern 240a, 240b, 240c, 240d, 240e, 240f, 240g, 240h or 240i of the set of via layout patterns, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(195) The set of via layout patterns 540 is usable to manufacture a corresponding set of vias 640 (FIGS. 6A-6D) of integrated circuit 600. In some embodiments, via layout patterns 540a, 540b, 540c, 540d, 540e, 540f, 540g, 540h, 540i, 540j, 540k, 540l of the set of via layout patterns 540 are usable to manufacture corresponding vias 640a, 640b, 640c, 640d, 640e, 640f, 640g, 640h, 640i, 640j, 640k, 640l of the set of vias 640 (FIGS. 6A-6D) of integrated circuit 600. In some embodiments, the set of via layout patterns 560 includes other members (not shown for ease of illustration).

(196) Via layout patterns 540a, 540c and 540e are between power rail layout pattern 232a of FIG. 5 and corresponding metal over diffusion layout patterns 510a, 510c and 510e. Via layout patterns 540g and 540i are between power rail layout pattern 232b of FIG. 5 and corresponding metal over

diffusion layout patterns **510g** and **510i**. Via layout patterns **540b** and **540d** are between conductive feature layout pattern **530a** and corresponding metal over diffusion layout patterns **510b** and **520b**. Via layout patterns **540f**, **540h**, **540j**, **540k** and **540l** are between conductive feature layout pattern **530b** and corresponding metal over diffusion layout patterns **510f**, **510h**, **510j**, **510l** and **510n**. (197) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of patterns in the set of via layout patterns **540** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(198) In some embodiments, by extending the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** in the first direction X and the second direction Y (e.g., 2 directions) and by positioning the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** to overlap at least the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **510**, the set of gate layout patterns **504** or the set of active regions **502**, the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** provide additional routing resources in the second direction Y and located below upper metallization layers (e.g., M0, M1, etc.) in layout design **500**. By providing routing resources below upper metallization levels (e.g., M0, M1, etc.), the use of the upper metallization layers (e.g., M0, M1, etc.) can be reduced or the upper metallization layers (e.g., M0, M1, etc.) can be utilized as additional routing resources resulting in layout design **500** having at least a reduced pitch, a smaller area or a smaller standard cell than other approaches.

#### Integrated Circuit

(199) FIGS. **6A**, **6B**, **6C** and **6D** are diagrams of an integrated circuit **600**, in accordance with some embodiments.

(200) FIG. **6A** is a cross-sectional view of an integrated circuit **600** corresponding to layout design **500** as intersected by plane E-E', in accordance with some embodiments. FIG. **6B** is a cross-sectional view of an integrated circuit **600** corresponding to layout design **500** as intersected by plane F-F', in accordance with some embodiments. FIG. **6C** is a cross-sectional view of an integrated circuit **600** corresponding to layout design **500** as intersected by plane G-G', in accordance with some embodiments. FIG. **6D** is a cross-sectional view of an integrated circuit **600** corresponding to layout design **500** as intersected by plane H-H', in accordance with some embodiments.

(201) Integrated circuit **600** is manufactured by layout design **500**. Integrated circuit **600** is an embodiment of a portion of integrated circuit **400**.

(202) Structural relationships including alignment, lengths and widths, as well as configurations of integrated circuit **600** are similar to the structural relationships and configurations of layout design **500** of FIG. 5, and similar detailed description will not be described in FIGS. **6A-6D** for brevity.

(203) Integrated circuit **600** is a variation of integrated circuit **300** (FIGS. **3A-3D**), and similar detailed description will not be described for brevity. For example, integrated circuit illustrates an example where a set of contacts **620** has a U-shape.

(204) Integrated circuit **600** includes a well region **601a**, a well region **601b**, a set of active regions **602**, a substrate **603**, the set of gates **604**, the set of contacts **610**, the set of contacts **620**, the set of conductive features **630**, the set of power rails **632**, the set of vias **640** and a set of insulating layers **670**.

(205) In comparison with integrated circuit **300** of FIGS. **3A-3D**, well region **601a** replaces well region **301a**, well region **601b** replaces well region **301b**, set of active regions **602** replaces set of active regions **302**, substrate **603** replaces substrate **303**, set of gates **604** replaces set of gates **304**, set of contacts **610** replaces set of contacts **310**, set of contacts **620** replaces set of contacts **320**, set of conductive structures **630** replaces set of conductive structures **330**, set of power rails **632** replaces set of power rails **332**, set of vias **640** replaces the set of vias **340**, set of insulating layers **670** replaces set of insulating layers **370**, insulating region **660** or **662** replaces insulating region **360**.

(206) In some embodiments, well region **601a** is similar to well region **301a**, well region **601b** is similar to well region **301b**, set of active regions **602** is similar to set of active regions **302**, substrate **603** is similar to substrate **303**, set of gates **604** is similar to set of gates **304**, set of

contacts **610** is similar to set of contacts **310**, set of contacts **620** is similar to set of contacts **320**, set of conductive structures **630** is similar to set of conductive structures **330**, set of power rails **632** is similar to the set of power rails **332**, set of vias **640** is similar to the set of vias **340**, set of insulating layers **670** is similar to set of insulating layers **370**, insulating region **660** or **662** is similar to insulating region **360**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(207) The set of active regions **602** includes a sub-set of active regions **602a** and a sub-set of active regions **602b**. In some embodiments, sub-set of active regions **602a**, **602b** is similar to corresponding sub-set of active regions **302a**, **302b**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(208) The sub-set of active regions **602a** includes at least active region **602a1**, **602a2**, **602a3**, **602a4**, **602a5**, **602a6**, **602a7**, **602a8** or **602a9**. Each of the active regions **602a1**, **602a2**, **602a3**, **602a4**, **602a5**, **602a6**, **602a7**, **602a8** and **602a9** of the sub-set of active regions **602a** is separated from an adjacent active region of the sub-set of active regions **602a** in the first direction X.

(209) Active regions **602a1**, **602a2**, **602a3**, **602a4**, **602a5**, **602a6**, **602a7**, **602a8** and **602a9** of the sub-set of active regions **602a** are embedded in the well region **601a** of integrated circuit **600**.

(210) Active regions **602a1**, **602a2**, **602a3**, **602a4**, **602a5**, **602a6**, **602a7**, **602a8** and **602a9** include dopants of the first dopant type. In some embodiments, the first dopant type is an N-type dopant. In some embodiments, the first dopant type is a P-type dopant.

(211) In some embodiments, active regions active regions **602a1**, **602a2**, **602a3**, **602a4**, **602a5**, **602a6**, **602a7**, **602a8** and **602a9** include N-type dopants as the first dopant type, and well region **601a** is a P-type of well. In some embodiments, active regions Active regions **602a1**, **602a2**, **602a3**, **602a4**, **602a5**, **602a6**, **602a7**, **602a8** and **602a9** include P-type dopants as the first dopant type, and well region **601a** is an N-type of well.

(212) The sub-set of active regions **602b** includes at least active region **602b1**, **602b2**, **602b3**, **602b4**, **602b5**, **602b6**, **602b7**, **602b8** or **602b9**.

(213) Each of the active regions **602b1**, **602b2**, **602b3**, **602b4**, **602b5**, **602b6**, **602b7**, **602b8** and **602b9** of the sub-set of active regions **602b** is separated from an adjacent active region of the sub-set of active regions **602b** in the first direction X.

(214) Active regions **602b1**, **602b2**, **602b3**, **602b4**, **602b5**, **602b6**, **602b7**, **602b8** and **602b9** of the sub-set of active regions **602b** are embedded in the well region **601b** of integrated circuit **600**. Active regions **602b1**, **602b2**, **602b3**, **602b4**, **602b5**, **602b6**, **602b7**, **602b8** and **602b9** include dopants of a second dopant type different from the first dopant type. In some embodiments, the second dopant type is a P-type dopant and the first dopant type is an N-type dopant. In some embodiments, the second dopant type is an N-type dopant and the first dopant type is a P-type dopant.

(215) In some embodiments, active regions **602b1**, **602b2**, **602b3**, **602b4**, **602b5**, **602b6**, **602b7**, **602b8** and **602b9** include P-type dopants as the second dopant type, and well region **601b** is an N-type of well. In some embodiments, active regions **602b1**, **602b2**, **602b3**, **602b4**, **602b5**, **602b6**, **602b7**, **602b8** and **602b9** include N-type dopants as the second dopant type, and well region **601b** is a P-type of well.

(216) In some embodiments, active region **602a1** corresponds to the source of NMOS transistor **N4**. In some embodiments, active region **602a2** corresponds to the drain of NMOS transistor **N4** and the source of NMOS transistor **N3**. In some embodiments, active region **602a3** corresponds to the drain of NMOS transistor **N3** and the drain of NMOS transistor **N7**. In some embodiments, active region **602a4** corresponds to the drain of NMOS transistor **N8** and the source of NMOS transistor **N7**. In some embodiments, active region **602a5** corresponds to the source of NMOS transistor **N2** and the source of NMOS transistor **N8**. In some embodiments, active region **602a6** corresponds to the drain of NMOS transistor **N2** and the source of NMOS transistor **N1**. In some embodiments, active region **602a7** corresponds to the drain of NMOS transistor **N5** and the drain of NMOS transistor **N1**. In some embodiments, active region **602a8** corresponds to the source of

NMOS transistor N5 and the drain of NMOS transistor N6. In some embodiments, active region **602a9** corresponds to the source of NMOS transistor N6.

(217) In some embodiments, active region **602b1** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistor P4. In some embodiments, active region **602b2** corresponds to the source of PMOS transistor P2 and the source of PMOS transistor P4. In some embodiments, active region **602b3** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistor P2 and the drain of PMOS transistor P6. In some embodiments, active region **602b4** corresponds to the source of PMOS transistor P8 and the source of PMOS transistor P6. In some embodiments, active region **602b5** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistor P8 and the source of PMOS transistor P3. In some embodiments, active region **602b6** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistor P1 and the drain of PMOS transistor P3. In some embodiments, active region **602b7** corresponds to the source of PMOS transistor P1 and the source of PMOS transistor P5. In some embodiments, active region **602b8** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistor P7 and the drain of PMOS transistor P5. In some embodiments, active region **602b9** corresponds to the source of PMOS transistor P7.

(218) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of active regions in the set of active regions **602** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(219) Set of gates **604** includes at least gate **604a**, **604b**, **604c**, **604d**, **604e**, **604f**, **604g**, **604h**, **604i** or **604j**. At least one of gate **604a**, **604b**, **604c**, **604d**, **604e**, **604f**, **604g**, **604h**, **604i** or **604j** of the set of gates **604** is similar to at least one of gate **304a**, **304b**, **304c**, **304d**, **304e**, **304f** or **304g** of the set of gates **304**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted. In some embodiments, at least gate **604a** or **604j** is a dummy gate.

(220) Gate **604b** is the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P4 and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N4 of FIG. 4. Gate **604c** is the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P2 and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N3 of FIG. 4. Gate **604d** is the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P6 and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N7 of FIG. 4. Gate **604e** is the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P8 and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N8 of FIG. 4. Gate **604f** is the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P3 and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N2 of FIG. 4. Gate **604g** is the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P1 and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N1 of FIG. 4. Gate **604h** is the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P5 and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N5 of FIG. 4. Gate **604i** is the gate terminal of PMOS transistor P7 and the gate terminal of NMOS transistor N6 of FIG. 4.

(221) The set of contacts **610** includes at least contact **610a**, **610b**, **610c**, **610d**, **610e**, **610f**, **610g**, **610h**, **610i**, **610j**, **610k**, **610l**, **610m** or **610n**. At least one of contact **610a**, **610b**, **610c**, **610d**, **610e**, **610f**, **610g**, **610h**, **610i**, **610j**, **610k**, **610l**, **610m** or **610n** of the set of contacts **610** is similar to at least one of contact **310a**, **310b**, **310c**, **310d**, **310e**, **310f**, **310g**, **310h**, **310i** or **310j** of the set of contacts **310**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(222) Contacts **610a**, **610b**, **610c**, **610d**, **610e**, **610f**, **610g**, **610h**, **610i**, **610j**, **610k**, **610l**, **610m**, and **610n** of the set of contacts **610** overlap corresponding active regions **602a1**, **602a3**, **602a5**, **602a7**, **602a9**, **602b1**, **602b2**, **602b3**, **602b4**, **602b5**, **602b6**, **602b7**, **602b8** and **602b9**. Contacts **610a**, **610b**, **610c**, **610d**, **610e**, **610f**, **610g**, **610h**, **610i**, **610j**, **610k**, **610l**, **610m** and **610n** of the set of contacts **610** are electrically coupled to corresponding active regions **602a1**, **602a3**, **602a5**, **602a7**, **602a9**, **602b1**, **602b2**, **602b3**, **602b4**, **602b5**, **602b6**, **602b7**, **602b8** and **602b9**. In some embodiments, the set of contacts **610** is located on the second portion of the second level.

(223) Other configurations or arrangements of the set of contacts **610** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(224) Insulating region **660** or **662** is configured to insulate one or more elements in integrated circuit **600** from each other. In some embodiments, insulating region **660** or **662** is similar to insulating region **360**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(225) Insulating region **660** is over active region **602a6**. Insulating region **660** is positioned between contact portions **620a** and **620b** and active region **602a6** thereby electrically insulating

contact portions **620a** and **620b** from active region **602a6**.

(226) Insulating region **662** is over active region **602a8**. Insulating region **662** is positioned between contact portions **620b** and **620c** and active region **602a8** thereby electrically insulating contact portions **620b** and **620c** from active region **602a8**.

(227) In some embodiments, insulating region **660** and **662** are part of a set of insulating layers **670**. In some embodiments, at least insulating region **660** or **662** or the set of insulating layers **670** is located on the second portion of the second level.

(228) In some embodiments, the set of insulating layers **670** are configured to electrically insulate at least one member of the set of active regions **602**, the set of gates **604**, the set of contacts **610**, the set of contacts **620**, the set of conductive structures **630**, the set of power rail **632** or the set of vias **640** from at least another one member of the set of active regions **602**, the set of gates **604**, the set of contacts **610**, the set of contacts **620**, the set of conductive structures **630**, the set of power rail **632** or the set of vias **640**.

(229) In some embodiments, at least insulating region **600** or **662** or the set of insulating layers **670** is over active regions of the set of active regions **602** different from active regions **602a6** or **602a8**, and insulating region **660** or **662** or the set of insulating layers **670** electrically isolate the corresponding one or more other active regions from other overlying layers (e.g., contacts in the MD2 layer). For example, in some embodiments, insulating region **660** or **662** or the set of insulating layers **670** can replace one or more contacts of the set of contacts **610**.

(230) In some embodiments, at least insulating region **660** or **662** or the set of insulating layers **670** are positioned over one or more gates of the set of gates **604** and at least insulating region **660** or **662** or the set of insulating layers **670** electrically isolate the corresponding one or more gates from other overlying layers (e.g., contacts in the MD2 layer).

(231) Other configurations, arrangements or quantities for at least insulating region **660** or **662** or the set of insulating layers **670** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(232) The set of contacts **620** extends in the first direction X and the second direction Y. In some embodiments, set of contacts **620** is referred to as a 2D structure since contact portions **620b** and **620c** (or **620a**) extend in at least two different directions (e.g., first direction X and the second direction Y). In some embodiments, the set of contacts **620** has a U-shape. In some embodiments, the set of contacts **620** has one or more of a L-shape similar to a set of contacts **320** of FIGS. 3A-3D, a W-shape similar to a set of contacts **700C** of FIG. 7C, a T-shape similar to a set of contacts **700D** of FIG. 7D, an O-shape (not shown), or the like. Other shapes or numbers of portions in the set of contacts **620** (FIG. 6A-6D) are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(233) The set of contacts **620** includes contact portions **620a**, **620b** and **620c**. At least one of contact portions **620a**, **620b** or **620c** of the set of contacts **620** is similar to at least one of contact portions **320a** or **320b** of the set of contacts **320**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted. The set of contacts **620** is located on the third level.

(234) At least one of the contact portions of the set of contacts **620** overlaps at least one of the set of active regions **602** or at least one of the set of contacts **610**. In some embodiments, the set of contacts **620** overlaps the set of gates **604**.

(235) Contact portion **620a** and **620c** of the set of contacts **620** extend in the second direction Y. Contact portion **620a** and **620c** are separated from each other in the first direction X. Contact portion **620b** of the set of contacts **620** extends in the first direction X. In some embodiments, contact portions **620a**, **620b** and **620c** are part of the same continuous contact structure. In some embodiments, the set of contacts **620** includes two or more separate or discontinuous contact portions that are separated from each other in at least the first direction X or the second direction Y.

(236) Contact portion **620a** of the set of contacts **620** overlaps contact **610m** of the set of contacts **610** and an insulating region **662**. Contact portion **620a** overlaps active regions **602b8** and **602a8**. In some embodiments, contact portion **620a** is directly coupled to contact **610m** of the set of contacts **610**. In some embodiments, contact portion **620a** is electrically coupled to active region



**602b8** by contact **610m**. In some embodiments, contact portion **620a** is electrically isolated from active region **602a8** by the insulating region **662**.

(237) Contact portion **620b** of the set of contacts **620** overlaps contact **610d** of the set of contacts **610** and insulating regions **660** and **662**. Contact portion **620b** overlaps active regions **602a6**, **602a7** and **602a8**. In some embodiments, contact portion **620b** is directly coupled to contact **610d** of the set of contacts **610**. In some embodiments, contact portion **620b** is electrically coupled to active region **602a7** by contact **610d**. In some embodiments, contact portion **620b** is electrically isolated from active region **602a6** by the insulating region **660**. In some embodiments, contact portion **620b** is electrically isolated from active region **602a8** by the insulating region **662**.

(238) Contact portion **620c** of the set of contacts **620** overlaps contact **610k** of the set of contacts **610** and an insulating region **660**. Contact portion **620c** overlaps active regions **602b6** and **602a6**. In some embodiments, contact portion **620c** is directly coupled to contact **610k** of the set of contacts **610**. In some embodiments, contact portion **620c** is electrically coupled to active region **602b6** by contact **610k**. In some embodiments, contact portion **620c** is electrically isolated from active region **602a6** by the insulating region **660**.

(239) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of contacts in the set of contacts **620** are within the scope of the present disclosure. For example, in some embodiments, contact portion **620a**, contact portion **620b** or other contacts similar to contact portion **620a** or **620b** in the set of contacts **620** overlap or extend over at least another contact in the MD1 level or a gate in the POLY level of integrated circuit **300** or **600** (FIGS. 6A-6D).

(240) The set of conductive structures **630** includes at least conductive structure **630a** or **630b**. In some embodiments, conductive structure **630a**, **630b** is similar to corresponding conductive structure **330a**, **330b**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted.

(241) The set of conductive structures **630** overlap at least the set of contacts **610** or **620** or the set of gates **604**. The set of conductive structures **630** are over the set of active regions **602**. In some embodiments, the set of conductive structures **630** are configured to provide an electrical connection from at least an active region of the set of active regions **602** or a gate of the set of gates **604** to at least another active region of the set of active regions **602** or gate of the set of gates **604**.

(242) Conductive structure **630a** overlaps contacts **610b** and **610c**, contact portion **620b** and insulating region **660**. Conductive structure **630a** is over active regions **602a3**, **602a4**, **602a5** and **602a6**. In some embodiments, conductive structure **630a** extends between gates **604c** and **604g**.

(243) Conductive structure **630b** overlaps contacts **610f**, **610g**, **610h**, **610i**, **610j**, **610g**, **610h**, **610i**, **610j**, **610k**, **610l**, **610m** and **610n**, contact portions **620a** and **620c**, and at least gate **604a**, **604b**, **604c**, **604d**, **604e**, **604f**, **604g**, **604h**, **604i** or **604j**. Conductive structure **630b** is over the sub-set of active regions **602b**. Conductive structure **630b** is over active regions **602b1**, **602b2**, **602b3**, **602b4**, **602b5**, **602b6**, **602b7**, **602b8** and **602b9**. In some embodiments, conductive structure **630b** extends from gate **604a** to gate **604j**.

(244) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of structures in the set of conductive structures **630** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(245) Set of power rails **632** includes at least power rail **632a** or **632b**. In some embodiments, power rails **632a**, **632b** are similar to corresponding power rails **632a**, **632b**, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted. Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of power rails in the set of power rails **632** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(246) Set of vias **640** includes at least via layout pattern **640a**, **640b**, **640c**, **640d**, **640e**, **640f**, **640g**, **640h**, **640i**, **640j**, **640k** or **640l**. At least one of vias **640a**, **640b**, **640c**, **640d**, **640e**, **640f**, **640g**, **640h**, **640i**, **640j**, **640k** or **640l** of the set of vias **640** is similar to at least one of vias **340a**, **340b**, **340c**, **340d**, **340e**, **340f**, **340g**, **340h** or **340i** of the set of vias, and similar detailed description is therefore omitted. In some embodiments, the set of vias **560** includes other members (not shown for ease of illustration).

(247) Vias **640a**, **640c** and **640e** are between power rail **632a** and corresponding contacts **610a**,

**610c** and **610e**, and thereby provides an electrical connection between power rail **632a** and corresponding contacts **610a**, **610c** and **610e**. Vias **640g** and **640i** are between power rail **632b** and corresponding contacts **610g** and **610i**, and thereby provides an electrical connection between power rail **632b** and corresponding contacts **610g** and **610i**.

(248) Via **640b** is between conductive structure **630a** and contact **610b**, and thereby provides an electrical connection between conductive structure **630a** and contact **610b**.

(249) Via **640d** is between conductive structure **630a** and contact portion **620b** and thereby provides an electrical connection between conductive structure **630a** and contact portion **620b**.

(250) Vias **640f**, **640h**, **640j**, **640k** and **640l** are between conductive structure **630b** and corresponding contacts **610f**, **610h**, **610j**, **610l** and **610n**, and thereby provides an electrical connection between conductive structure **630b** and corresponding contacts **610f**, **610h**, **610j**, **610l** and **610n**.

(251) In some embodiments, at least via **640a**, **640b**, **640c**, **640e**, **640f**, **640g**, **640h**, **640i**, **640j**, **640k** or **640l** of the set of vias **640** are positioned at the VDT level. In some embodiments, via **640d** of the set of vias **640** are positioned at the VD level. In some embodiments, a height of at least via **640a**, **640b**, **640c**, **640e**, **640f**, **640g**, **640h**, **640i**, **640j**, **640k** or **640l** of the set of vias **640** is the same as a height of at least another via of via **640a**, **640b**, **640c**, **640e**, **640f**, **640g**, **640h**, **640i**, **640j**, **640k** or **640l** of the set of vias **640**. In some embodiments, a height in the third direction Z of at least via **640a**, **640b**, **640c**, **640e**, **640f**, **640g**, **640h**, **640i**, **640j**, **640k** or **640l** of the set of vias **640** is different from a height in the third direction Z of via **640d** of the set of vias **640**.

(252) Other configurations, arrangements on other levels or quantities of patterns in the set of vias **640** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(253) In some embodiments, the active region **602b2** (e.g., source of PMOS transistors **P2** and **P4** of FIG. 4) and the active region **602b4** (e.g., the source of PMOS transistor **P6** and **P8** of FIG. 4) are electrically coupled to the reference voltage supply **VSS**. For example, in some embodiments, active region **602b2**, **602b4** is electrically coupled to corresponding contact **610g**, **610i** of the set of contacts **610**, and corresponding contact **610g**, **610i** is electrically coupled to power rail **632b** of the set of power rails **632** by corresponding via **640g**, **640i** of the set of vias **640**. In some embodiments, power rail **632b** is coupled to voltage supply **VDD**.

(254) In some embodiments, the active region **602a1** (e.g., the source of NMOS transistor **N4** of FIG. 4), the active region **602a5** (e.g., the source of NMOS transistors **N2** and **N4** of FIG. 4) and the active region **602a9** (e.g., the source of NMOS transistor **N6** of FIG. 4) are electrically coupled to the reference voltage supply **VSS**. For example, in some embodiments, active region **602a1**, **602a5**, **602a9** is electrically coupled to corresponding contact **610a**, **610c**, **610e** of the set of contacts **610**, and corresponding contact **610a**, **610c**, **610e** is electrically coupled to power rail **632a** of the set of power rails **632** by corresponding via **640a**, **640c**, **640e** of the set of vias **640**. In some embodiments, power rail **632a** is coupled to the reference voltage supply **VSS**.

(255) In some embodiments, at least conductive structure **630b** of the set of conductive structures **630** is configured to provide an electrical connection between at least a drain of PMOS transistor **P4**, a drain of PMOS transistors **P2** and **P6**, a source of PMOS transistor **P3** and a drain of PMOS transistor **P8**, a source of PMOS transistors **P1** and **P5**, and a source of PMOS transistor **P7**. For example, in some embodiments, the active region **602b1** corresponds to the drain of PMO transistor **P4**, the active region **602b3** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistors **P2** and **P6**, the active region **602b5** corresponds to the source of PMOS transistor **P3** and the drain of PMOS transistor **P8**, the active region **602b7** corresponds to the source of PMOS transistors **P1** and **P5**, the active region **602b9** corresponds to the source of PMOS transistor **P7**, and are electrically coupled together by at least conductive structure **630b**. In some embodiments, active region **602b1**, **602b3**, **602b5**, **602b7**, **602b9** is electrically coupled to corresponding contact **610f**, **610h**, **610j**, **610l**, **610n** of the set of contacts **610**, and corresponding contact **610f**, **610h**, **610j**, **610l**, **610n** of the set of contacts **610** is electrically coupled to conductive structure **630b** by corresponding vias **640f**, **640h**,

**640j**, **640k**, **640l** of the set of vias **640**.

(256) In some embodiments, at least contact portions **620a**, **620b** and **620c** of the set of contacts **620** are configured to provide an electrical connection between each of the drain of PMOS transistors **P1** and **P3**, the drain of PMOS transistors **P5** and **P7**, and the drain of NMOS transistors **N1** and **N5**. For example, in some embodiments, the active region **602b6** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistors **P1** and **P3**, the active region **602b8** corresponds to the drain of PMOS transistors **P5** and **P7**, and the active region **602a7** corresponds to the drain of NMOS transistors **N1** and **N5**, and are electrically coupled together by at least contact portions **620a**, **620b** and **620c** of the set of contacts **620**.

(257) For example, in some embodiments, contact portions **620a**, **620b** and **620c** of the set of contacts **620** are electrically coupled to contact **610m** of the set of contacts **610**, and contact **610m** of the set of contacts **610** is electrically coupled to active region **602b8**.

(258) For example, in some embodiments, contact portions **620a**, **620b** and **620c** of the set of contacts **620** are electrically coupled to contact **610k** of the set of contacts **610**, and contact **610k** of the set of contacts **610** is electrically coupled to active region **602b6**.

(259) For example, in some embodiments, contact portions **620a**, **620b** and **620c** of the set of contacts **620** are electrically coupled to contact **610d** of the set of contacts **610**, and contact **610d** of the set of contacts **610** is electrically coupled to active region **602a7**.

(260) In some embodiments, contact portions **620a**, **620b** and **620c** of the set of contacts **620** are further electrically coupled to conductive structure **630a** of the set of conductive structures **630** by via **640d** of the set of vias **640**, conductive structure **630a** is electrically coupled to contact **610b** by via **640b** of the set of vias **640**, and contact **610b** of the set of contacts **610** is electrically coupled to active region **602a3**.

(261) In some embodiments, contact portions **620a** and **620b** of the set of contacts **620** are electrically insulated (e.g., not electrically coupled) with active region **602a6** by insulating region **660**, and therefore active regions **602b6**, **602b8** and **602a7** are electrically insulated (e.g., not electrically coupled) with active region **602a6** by at least insulating region **660**.

(262) In some embodiments, contact portions **620b** and **620c** of the set of contacts **620** are electrically insulated (e.g., not electrically coupled) with active region **602a8** by insulating region **662**, and therefore active regions **602b6**, **602b8** and **602a7** are electrically insulated (e.g., not electrically coupled) with active region **602a8** by at least insulating region **662**.

(263) In some embodiments, by at least providing an electrical connection between active regions **602b6**, **602b8** and **602a7** of the set of active regions **602** using contact portions **620a**, **620b** and **620c** of the set of contacts **620** in the MD2 layer, or electrically insulating active regions **602a6** and **602a8** from active regions **602b6**, **602b8** and **602a7** using insulating regions **660** and **662**, other metallization levels (e.g., M0, M1, etc.) can be utilized for additional routing resources resulting in integrated circuit **600** having at least a reduced pitch, a smaller area or a smaller standard cell than other approaches.

#### Layout Design of an Integrated Circuit

(264) FIG. 7A is a diagram of a layout design **700A** of a set of contacts **700C** of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(265) FIG. 7B is a diagram of a layout design **700B** of a set of contacts **700D** of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(266) Layout designs **700A** and **700B** are usable to manufacture the set of contacts **700C** and **700D**. Layout designs **700A** and **700B** are usable to manufacture the set of contacts **320** or **620** of corresponding integrated circuit **300** or **600**.

(267) Layout design **700A** is a variation of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** (FIG. 2) or **520** (FIG. 5). In comparison with the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** of FIG. 5, layout design **700A** has a W-shape. In comparison with the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **520** of FIG. 5, layout design **700A** further includes metal over diffusion layout pattern

**720a.**

(268) In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout patterns **720a** and **720b** are usable to manufacture corresponding contact portions **720a'** and **720b'** of the corresponding set of contacts **700C** and **700D**.

(269) In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout pattern **720a** extends in the second direction Y. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout pattern **720a** has a same length in the second direction Y as a length in the second direction Y of metal over diffusion layout pattern **520a** or **520c**. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout pattern **720a** contacts metal over diffusion layout pattern **520b**. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout pattern **720a** contacts a midpoint of metal over diffusion layout pattern **520b** in the second direction Y. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout patterns **520a**, **520b** and **720a** are portions of a same continuous layout pattern (e.g., layout design **700A**).

(270) Layout design **700B** is a variation of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** (FIG. 2) or **520** (FIG. 5). In comparison with the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** of FIG. 2, layout design **700B** has a T-shape. In comparison with the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** of FIG. 2, metal over diffusion layout pattern **720b** replaces metal over diffusion layout pattern **220a**.

(271) In comparison with metal over diffusion layout pattern **220a** of FIG. 2, metal over diffusion layout pattern **720b** is shifted in the second direction Y from metal over diffusion layout pattern **220a**, and is rotated about the X-axis from metal over diffusion layout pattern **220a**.

(272) In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout pattern **720b** extends in the second direction Y. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout pattern **720b** contacts metal over diffusion layout pattern **220b**. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout pattern **720b** contacts a midpoint of metal over diffusion layout pattern **220b** in the second direction Y. In some embodiments, metal over diffusion layout patterns **220b** and **720b** are portions of a same continuous layout pattern (e.g., layout design **700B**).

(273) FIG. 7C is a top view of a diagram of a set of contacts **700C** of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(274) FIG. 7D is a top view of a diagram of a set of contacts **700D** of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments.

(275) Structural relationships including alignment, lengths and widths, as well as configurations of set of contacts **700C** or **700D** of corresponding FIGS. 7C-7D are similar to the structural relationships and configurations of corresponding layout design **700A** or **700B** of corresponding FIGS. 7A-7B, and similar detailed description will not be described in FIGS. 3A-3D for brevity.

(276) Set of contacts **700C** or **700D** is a variation of the set of contacts **320** (FIGS. 3A-3D) or **620** (FIGS. 6A-6D). In comparison with the set of contacts **320** (FIGS. 3A-3D) or **620** (FIGS. 6A-6D), set of contacts **700C** has a W-shape. In comparison with the set of contacts **620** of FIGS. 6A-6D, set of contacts **700C** further includes contact portion **720a'**.

(277) In comparison with the set of contacts **320** (FIGS. 3A-3D) or **620** (FIGS. 6A-6D), set of contacts **700D** has a T-shape. In comparison with the set of contacts **320** of FIGS. 3A-3D, contact portion **720b'** of the set of contacts **700D** replaces contact portion **320a**.

(278) Other shapes in layout design **700A** or **700B** or the set of contacts **700C** or **700D** are within the scope of the present disclosure.

(279) FIG. 8 is a flowchart of a method **800** of forming or manufacturing an integrated circuit in accordance with some embodiments. It is understood that additional operations may be performed before, during, and/or after the method **800** depicted in FIG. 8, and that some other operations may only be briefly described herein. In some embodiments, the method **800** is usable to form integrated circuits, such as at least integrated circuit **100** (FIG. 1), **300** (FIGS. 3A-3D), **400** (FIG. 4), **600** (FIGS. 6A-6D), or an integrated circuit portion, such as at least set of contacts **700C** (FIG. 7C) or **700D** (FIG. 7D). In some embodiments, the method **800** is usable to form integrated circuits

having similar structural relationships as one or more of layout design **200** (FIG. 2), **500** (FIG. 5), **700A** (FIG. 7A) or **700B** (FIG. 7B).

(280) In operation **802** of method **800**, a layout design of an integrated circuit is generated. Operation **802** is performed by a processing device (e.g., processor **1002** (FIG. 10)) configured to execute instructions for generating a layout design. In some embodiments, the layout design of method **800** includes one or more of layout design **200**, **500**, **800** or **700A-700B**. In some embodiments, the layout design of the present application is in a graphic database system (GDSII) file format.

(281) In operation **804** of method **800**, the integrated circuit is manufactured based on the layout design. In some embodiments, the integrated circuit of method **800** includes one or more of integrated circuit **100**, **300**, **400** or **600**. In some embodiments, the integrated circuit of method **800** includes one or more of an integrated circuit portion, such as at least set of contacts **700C** or **700D**. In some embodiments, operation **804** of method **800** comprises manufacturing at least one mask based on the layout design, and manufacturing the integrated circuit based on the at least one mask.

(282) FIG. 9 is a flowchart of a method **900** of generating a layout design of an integrated circuit, in accordance with some embodiments. It is understood that additional operations may be performed before, during, and/or after the method **900** depicted in FIG. 9, and that some other processes may only be briefly described herein. In some embodiments, method **900** is an embodiment of operation **802** of method **800**. In some embodiments, the method **900** is usable to generate one or more layout patterns of layout design **200** (FIG. 2) or **500** (FIG. 5) of an integrated circuit, such as integrated circuit **100** (FIG. 1), **300** (FIGS. 3A-3D), **400** (FIG. 4) or **600** (FIGS. 6A-6D). In some embodiments, the method **900** is usable to generate one or more layout patterns of layout design **700A** (FIG. 7A) or **700B** (FIG. 7B) of an integrated circuit portion, such as at least set of contacts **700C** (FIG. 7C) or **700D** (FIG. 7D).

(283) In operation **902** of method **900**, a set of active region layout patterns is generated or placed on layout design **200** or **500**. In some embodiments, the set of active region layout patterns of method **900** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of active region layout patterns **202** or **502**.

(284) In some embodiments, operation **902** includes generating or placing a first set of active region layout patterns corresponding to fabricating a first set of active regions of the integrated circuit, and generating or placing a second set of active region layout pattern corresponding to fabricating a second set of active regions of the integrated circuit. In some embodiments, the first set of active region layout patterns or the second set of active region layout patterns of operation **902** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of active region layout patterns **202** or **502**. In some embodiments, at least the first set of active regions or the second set of active regions of operation **902** includes at least portions of one or more active regions of the set of active regions **302** or **602**.

(285) In operation **904** of method **900**, a set of gate layout patterns is generated or placed on layout design **200** or **500**. In some embodiments, the set of gate layout patterns of method **900** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of gate layout patterns **204** or **504**. In some embodiments, the set of gate layout patterns of method **900** correspond to fabricating a set of gates.

(286) In some embodiments, operation **904** includes at least generating or placing a first gate layout pattern corresponding to fabricating a first gate or generating or placing a second gate layout pattern corresponding to fabricating a second gate. In some embodiments, the first gate layout pattern or the second gate layout pattern of operation **904** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of gate layout patterns **204** or **504**. In some embodiments, the first gate or the second gate of operation **904** includes at least portions of one or more gates of the set of gates **304** or **604**.

(287) In operation **906** of method **900**, a first set of contact layout patterns is generated or placed on layout design **200** or **500**. In some embodiments, the first set of contact layout patterns of method

**900** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** or **510**, set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** or **520** or layout design **700A-700B**. In some embodiments, the first set of contact layout patterns of method **900** correspond to fabricating a first set of contacts.

(288) In some embodiments, operation **906** includes at least generating or placing a first contact layout pattern corresponding to fabricating a first contact or generating or placing a second contact layout pattern corresponding to fabricating a second contact. In some embodiments, the first contact layout pattern or the second contact layout pattern of operation **906** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** or **510**, or set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** or **520**. In some embodiments, the first contact layout pattern or the second contact layout pattern of operation **906** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of layout design **700A** or **700B**. In some embodiments, the first contact or the second contact of operation **906** includes at least portions of one or more contacts of the set of contacts **310** or **610** or set of contacts **320**, **620**, **700C** or **700D**.

(289) In operation **908** of method **900**, a second set of contact layout patterns is generated or placed on layout design **200** or **500**. In some embodiments, the second set of contact layout patterns of method **900** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** or **520**, set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** or **510**, or layout design **700A-700B**. In some embodiments, the second set of contact layout patterns of method **900** correspond to fabricating a second set of contacts.

(290) In some embodiments, operation **908** includes at least generating or placing a third contact layout pattern corresponding to fabricating a third contact or generating or placing a fourth contact layout pattern corresponding to fabricating a fourth contact. In some embodiments, the third or fourth contact layout pattern of operation **908** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **220** or **520** or set of metal over diffusion layout patterns **210** or **510**. In some embodiments, the third or fourth contact of operation **908** includes at least portions of one or more contacts of the set of contacts **320**, **620**, **700C** or **700D** or set of contacts **310** or **610**.

(291) In operation **910** of method **900**, a first set of conductive feature layout patterns is generated or placed on layout design **200** or **500**. In some embodiments, the first set of conductive feature layout patterns of method **900** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of conductive feature layout patterns **230** or **530**. In some embodiments, the first set of conductive feature layout patterns of method **900** correspond to fabricating a first set of conductive structures.

(292) In some embodiments, operation **910** includes generating or placing a first conductive structure layout pattern corresponding to fabricating a first conductive structure. In some embodiments, the first conductive structure layout pattern of operation **910** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of conductive structure layout patterns **230** or **530**. In some embodiments, the first conductive structure of operation **910** includes at least portions of one or more conductive structures of the set of conductive structures **330** or **630**.

(293) In operation **912** of method **900**, a set of power rail layout patterns is generated or placed on layout design **200** or **500**. In some embodiments, the set of power rail layout patterns of method **900** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of power rail layout patterns **232** or **532**.

(294) In some embodiments, operation **912** includes at least generating or placing a first power rail layout pattern corresponding to fabricating a first power rail, or generating or placing a second power rail layout pattern corresponding to fabricating a second power rail. In some embodiments, the first power rail layout pattern of operation **912** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of power rail layout patterns **232** or **532**. In some embodiments, the second power rail layout pattern of operation **912** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of power rail layout patterns **232** or **532**. In some embodiments, the first power rail of

operation **912** includes at least portions of one or more power rails of the set of power rails **332** or **632**. In some embodiments, the second power rail of operation **912** includes at least portions of one or more power rails of the set of power rails **332** or **632**.

(295) In operation **914** of method **900**, a set of via layout patterns is generated or placed on layout design **200** or **500**. In some embodiments, the set of via layout patterns of method **900** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of via layout patterns **240** or **540**. In some embodiments, the set of via layout patterns of method **900** correspond to fabricating a set of vias.

(296) In some embodiments, operation **914** includes at least generating or placing a via layout pattern corresponding to a first via or generating or placing a second via layout pattern corresponding to a second via. In some embodiments, the first or the second via layout pattern of operation **914** includes at least portions of one or more layout patterns of the set of via layout patterns **240** or **540**. In some embodiments, the first or the second via of operation **914** includes at least portions of one or more vias of the set of vias **340** or **640**.

(297) In some embodiments, one or more of operations **902**, **904**, **906**, **908**, **910**, **912** or **914** is not performed. One or more of the operations of methods **800-900** is performed by a processing device configured to execute instructions for manufacturing an integrated circuit, such as at least integrated circuit **100**, **300**, **400** or **600**, or at least set of contacts **700C** (FIG. 7C) or **700D** (FIG. 7D). In some embodiments, one or more operations of methods **800-900** is performed using a same processing device as that used in a different one or more operations of methods **800-900**. In some embodiments, a different processing device is used to perform one or more operations of methods **800-900** from that used to perform a different one or more operations of methods **800-900**.

(298) FIG. **10** is a block diagram of a system **1000** for designing and manufacturing an IC layout design, in accordance with some embodiments. In some embodiments, system **1000** generates or places one or more IC layout designs described herein. In some embodiments, system **1000** manufactures one or more ICs based on the one or more IC layout designs described herein. System **1000** includes a hardware processor **1002** and a non-transitory, computer readable storage medium **1004** encoded with, i.e., storing, the computer program code **1006**, i.e., a set of executable instructions. Computer readable storage medium **1004** is configured for interfacing with manufacturing machines for producing the integrated circuit. The processor **1002** is electrically coupled to the computer readable storage medium **1004** by a bus **1008**. The processor **1002** is also electrically coupled to an I/O interface **1010** by bus **1008**. A network interface **1012** is also electrically connected to the processor **1002** by bus **1008**. Network interface **1012** is connected to a network **1014**, so that processor **1002** and computer readable storage medium **1004** are capable of connecting to external elements via network **1014**. The processor **1002** is configured to execute the computer program code **1006** encoded in the computer readable storage medium **1004** in order to cause system **1000** to be usable for performing a portion or all of the operations as described in method **800** or **900**.

(299) In some embodiments, the processor **1002** is a central processing unit (CPU), a multi-processor, a distributed processing system, an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), and/or a suitable processing unit.

(300) In some embodiments, the computer readable storage medium **1004** is an electronic, magnetic, optical, electromagnetic, infrared, and/or a semiconductor system (or apparatus or device). For example, the computer readable storage medium **1004** includes a semiconductor or solid-state memory, a magnetic tape, a removable computer diskette, a random access memory (RAM), a read-only memory (ROM), a rigid magnetic disk, and/or an optical disk. In some embodiments using optical disks, the computer readable storage medium **1004** includes a compact disk-read only memory (CD-ROM), a compact disk-read/write (CD-R/W), and/or a digital video disc (DVD).

(301) In some embodiments, the storage medium **1004** stores the computer program code **1006** configured to cause system **1000** to perform method **800** or **900**. In some embodiments, the storage

medium **1004** also stores information needed for performing method **800** or **900** as well as information generated during performance of method **800** or **900**, such as layout design **1016** and user interface **1018** and fabrication unit **1020**, and/or a set of executable instructions to perform the operation of method **800** or **900**. In some embodiments, layout design **1016** comprises one or more layout patterns of layout design **200**, **500**, **700A** or **700B**.

(302) In some embodiments, the storage medium **1004** stores instructions (e.g., computer program code **1006**) for interfacing with manufacturing machines. The instructions (e.g., computer program code **1006**) enable processor **1002** to generate manufacturing instructions readable by the manufacturing machines to effectively implement method **800** or **900** during a manufacturing process.

(303) System **1000** includes I/O interface **1010**. I/O interface **1010** is coupled to external circuitry. In some embodiments, I/O interface **1010** includes a keyboard, keypad, mouse, trackball, trackpad, and/or cursor direction keys for communicating information and commands to processor **1002**.

(304) System **1000** also includes network interface **1012** coupled to the processor **1002**. Network interface **1012** allows system **1000** to communicate with network **1014**, to which one or more other computer systems are connected. Network interface **1012** includes wireless network interfaces such as BLUETOOTH, WIFI, WIMAX, GPRS, or WCDMA; or wired network interface such as ETHERNET, USB, or IEEE-13104. In some embodiments, method **800** or **900** is implemented in two or more systems **1000**, and information such as layout design, user interface and fabrication unit are exchanged between different systems **1000** by network **1014**.

(305) System **1000** is configured to receive information related to a layout design through I/O interface **1010** or network interface **1012**. The information is transferred to processor **1002** by bus **1008** to determine a layout design for producing an IC (e.g., integrated circuit **100**, **300**, **400** or **600**) or a portion of an IC (e.g., conductive structure **700C** or **700D**). The layout design is then stored in computer readable medium **1004** as layout design **1016**. System **1000** is configured to receive information related to a user interface through I/O interface **1010** or network interface **1012**. The information is stored in computer readable medium **1004** as user interface **1018**. System **1000** is configured to receive information related to a fabrication unit through I/O interface **1010** or network interface **1012**. The information is stored in computer readable medium **1004** as fabrication unit **1020**. In some embodiments, the fabrication unit **1020** includes fabrication information utilized by system **1000**.

(306) In some embodiments, method **800** or **900** is implemented as a standalone software application for execution by a processor. In some embodiments, method **800** or **900** is implemented as a software application that is a part of an additional software application. In some embodiments, method **800** or **900** is implemented as a plug-in to a software application. In some embodiments, method **800** or **900** is implemented as a software application that is a portion of an EDA tool. In some embodiments, method **800** or **900** is implemented as a software application that is used by an EDA tool. In some embodiments, the EDA tool is used to generate a layout design of the integrated circuit device. In some embodiments, the layout design is stored on a non-transitory computer readable medium. In some embodiments, the layout design is generated using a tool such as VIRTUOSO® available from CADENCE DESIGN SYSTEMS, Inc., or another suitable layout generating tool. In some embodiments, the layout design is generated based on a netlist which is created based on the schematic design. In some embodiments, method **800** or **900** is implemented by a manufacturing device to manufacture an integrated circuit using a set of masks manufactured based on one or more layout designs generated by system **1000**. In some embodiments, system **1000** is a manufacturing device to manufacture an integrated circuit using a set of masks manufactured based on one or more layout designs of the present disclosure. In some embodiments, system **1000** of FIG. 10 generates layout designs of an IC that are smaller than other approaches. In some embodiments, system **1000** of FIG. 10 generates layout designs of an IC (e.g., integrated circuit **100**, **300**, **400** or **600**) or a portion of an IC (e.g., at least set of contacts **700C** of FIG. 7C or



**700D** of FIG. 7D) that occupy less area than other approaches.

(307) FIG. **11** is a block diagram of an integrated circuit (IC) manufacturing system **1100**, and an IC manufacturing flow associated therewith, in accordance with at least one embodiment of the present disclosure.

(308) In FIG. **11**, IC manufacturing system **1100** includes entities, such as a design house **1120**, a mask house **1130**, and an IC manufacturer/fabricator (“fab”) **1140**, that interact with one another in the design, development, and manufacturing cycles and/or services related to manufacturing an IC device **1160**. The entities in system **1100** are connected by a communications network. In some embodiments, the communications network is a single network. In some embodiments, the communications network is a variety of different networks, such as an intranet and the Internet. The communications network includes wired and/or wireless communication channels. Each entity interacts with one or more of the other entities and provides services to and/or receives services from one or more of the other entities. In some embodiments, one or more of design house **1120**, mask house **1130**, and IC fab **1140** is owned by a single larger company. In some embodiments, one or more of design house **1120**, mask house **1130**, and IC fab **1140** coexist in a common facility and use common resources.

(309) Design house (or design team) **1120** generates an IC design layout **1122**. IC design layout **1122** includes various geometrical patterns designed for an IC device **1160**. The geometrical patterns correspond to patterns of metal, oxide, or semiconductor layers that make up the various components of IC device **1160** to be fabricated. The various layers combine to form various IC features. For example, a portion of IC design layout **1122** includes various IC features, such as an active region, gate electrode, source electrode and drain electrode, metal lines or vias of an interlayer interconnection, and openings for bonding pads, to be formed in a semiconductor substrate (such as a silicon wafer) and various material layers disposed on the semiconductor substrate. Design house **1120** implements a proper design procedure to form IC design layout **1122**. The design procedure includes one or more of logic design, physical design or place and route. IC design layout **1122** is presented in one or more data files having information of the geometrical patterns. For example, IC design layout **1122** can be expressed in a GDSII file format or DFII file format.

(310) Mask house **1130** includes data preparation **1132** and mask fabrication **1134**. Mask house **1130** uses IC design layout **1122** to manufacture one or more masks to be used for fabricating the various layers of IC device **1160** according to IC design layout **1122**. Mask house **1130** performs mask data preparation **1132**, where IC design layout **1122** is translated into a representative data file (“RDF”). Mask data preparation **1132** provides the RDF to mask fabrication **1134**. Mask fabrication **1134** includes a mask writer. A mask writer converts the RDF to an image on a substrate, such as a mask (reticle) or a semiconductor wafer. The design layout is manipulated by mask data preparation **1132** to comply with particular characteristics of the mask writer and/or requirements of IC fab **1140**. In FIG. **11**, mask data preparation **1132** and mask fabrication **1134** are illustrated as separate elements. In some embodiments, mask data preparation **1132** and mask fabrication **1134** can be collectively referred to as mask data preparation.

(311) In some embodiments, mask data preparation **1132** includes optical proximity correction (OPC) which uses lithography enhancement techniques to compensate for image errors, such as those that can arise from diffraction, interference, other process effects and the like. OPC adjusts IC design layout **1122**. In some embodiments, mask data preparation **1132** includes further resolution enhancement techniques (RET), such as off-axis illumination, sub-resolution assist features, phase-shifting masks, other suitable techniques, and the like or combinations thereof. In some embodiments, inverse lithography technology (ILT) is also used, which treats OPC as an inverse imaging problem.

(312) In some embodiments, mask data preparation **1132** includes a mask rule checker (MRC) that checks the IC design layout that has undergone processes in OPC with a set of mask creation rules

which contain certain geometric and/or connectivity restrictions to ensure sufficient margins, to account for variability in semiconductor manufacturing processes, and the like. In some embodiments, the MRC modifies the IC design layout to compensate for limitations during mask fabrication **1134**, which may undo part of the modifications performed by OPC in order to meet mask creation rules.

(313) In some embodiments, mask data preparation **1132** includes lithography process checking (LPC) that simulates processing that will be implemented by IC fab **1140** to fabricate IC device **1160**. LPC simulates this processing based on IC design layout **1122** to create a simulated manufactured device, such as IC device **1160**. The processing parameters in LPC simulation can include parameters associated with various processes of the IC manufacturing cycle, parameters associated with tools used for manufacturing the IC, and/or other aspects of the manufacturing process. LPC takes into account various factors, such as aerial image contrast, depth of focus (“DOF”), mask error enhancement factor (“MEEF”), other suitable factors, and the like or combinations thereof. In some embodiments, after a simulated manufactured device has been created by LPC, if the simulated device is not close enough in shape to satisfy design rules, OPC and/or MRC are repeated to further refine IC design layout **1122**.

(314) It should be understood that the above description of mask data preparation **1132** has been simplified for the purposes of clarity. In some embodiments, data preparation **1132** includes additional features such as a logic operation (LOP) to modify the IC design layout according to manufacturing rules. Additionally, the processes applied to IC design layout **1122** during data preparation **1132** may be executed in a variety of different orders.

(315) After mask data preparation **1132** and during mask fabrication **1134**, a mask or a group of masks are fabricated based on the modified IC design layout. In some embodiments, an electron-beam (e-beam) or a mechanism of multiple e-beams is used to form a pattern on a mask (photomask or reticle) based on the modified IC design layout. The mask can be formed in various technologies. In some embodiments, the mask is formed using binary technology. In some embodiments, a mask pattern includes opaque regions and transparent regions. A radiation beam, such as an ultraviolet (UV) beam, used to expose the image sensitive material layer (e.g., photoresist) which has been coated on a wafer, is blocked by the opaque region and transmits through the transparent regions. In one example, a binary mask includes a transparent substrate (e.g., fused quartz) and an opaque material (e.g., chromium) coated in the opaque regions of the mask. In another example, the mask is formed using a phase shift technology. In the phase shift mask (PSM), various features in the pattern formed on the mask are configured to have proper phase difference to enhance the resolution and imaging quality. In various examples, the phase shift mask can be attenuated PSM or alternating PSM. The mask(s) generated by mask fabrication **1134** is used in a variety of processes. For example, such a mask(s) is used in an ion implantation process to form various doped regions in the semiconductor wafer, in an etching process to form various etching regions in the semiconductor wafer, and/or in other suitable processes.

(316) IC fab **1140** is an IC fabrication entity that includes one or more manufacturing facilities for the fabrication of a variety of different IC products. In some embodiments, IC Fab **1140** is a semiconductor foundry. For example, there may be a manufacturing facility for the front end fabrication of a plurality of IC products (front-end-of-line (FEOL) fabrication), while a second manufacturing facility may provide the back end fabrication for the interconnection and packaging of the IC products (back-end-of-line (BEOL) fabrication), and a third manufacturing facility may provide other services for the foundry entity.

(317) IC fab **1140** uses the mask (or masks) fabricated by mask house **1130** to fabricate IC device **1160**. Thus, IC fab **1140** at least indirectly uses IC design layout **1122** to fabricate IC device **1160**. In some embodiments, a semiconductor wafer **1142** is fabricated by IC fab **1140** using the mask (or masks) to form IC device **1160**. Semiconductor wafer **1142** includes a silicon substrate or other proper substrate having material layers formed thereon. Semiconductor wafer further includes one

or more of various doped regions, dielectric features, multilevel interconnects, and the like (formed at subsequent manufacturing steps).

(318) System **1100** is shown as having design house **1120**, mask house **1130** or IC fab **1140** as separate components or entities. However, it is understood that one or more of design house **1120**, mask house **1130** or IC fab **1140** are part of the same component or entity.

(319) Details regarding an integrated circuit (IC) manufacturing system (e.g., system **1100** of FIG. **16**), and an IC manufacturing flow associated therewith are found, e.g., in U.S. Pat. No. 9,256,709, granted Feb. 9, 2016, U.S. Pre-Grant Publication No. 20150278429, published Oct. 1, 2015, U.S. Pre-Grant Publication No. 20140040838, published Feb. 6, 2014, and U.S. Pat. No. 7,260,442, granted Aug. 21, 2007, the entireties of each of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

(320) One aspect of this description relates to an integrated circuit. In some embodiments, the integrated circuit includes a first active region, a second active region, a first insulating region, a first contact and a second contact. In some embodiment, the first active region extending in a first direction, being in a substrate, and being located on a first level, the first active region including a first drain/source region and a second drain/source region. In some embodiment, second active region extending in the first direction, being in the substrate, being located on the first level and being separated from the first active region in a second direction different from the first direction, the second active region including a third drain/source region. In some embodiment, the first insulating region is over the first drain/source region. In some embodiment, the first contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the third drain/source region, being electrically coupled to the third drain/source region and being located on a second level different from the first level. In some embodiment, the second contact being located on a third level different from the first level and the second level. In some embodiment, the second contact includes a first portion extending in the first direction, overlapping the first drain/source region and the second drain/source region. In some embodiment, the second contact further includes a second portion extending in the second direction, overlapping the first contact, the first drain/source region, the third drain/source region and the first insulating region, and being electrically coupled to the first portion, and being electrically insulated from the first drain/source region.

(321) Another aspect of this description relates to an integrated circuit. In some embodiments, the integrated circuit includes a first active region, a second active region, a first insulating region, a second insulating region, a first contact and a second contact. In some embodiments, the first active region extending in a first direction, being in a substrate, and being located on a first level, the first active region including a first drain/source region, and a second drain/source region. In some embodiments, the second active region in the substrate, being located on the first level, and being separated from the first active region in a second direction different from the first direction, the second active region including a third drain/source region and a fourth drain/source region. In some embodiments, the first insulating region over the first drain/source region. In some embodiments, the second insulating region over the second drain/source region, and being separated from the first insulating region in the first direction. In some embodiments, the first contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the third drain/source region, and being located on a second level different from the first level. In some embodiments, the second contact being located on a third level different from the first level and the second level. In some embodiments, the second contact includes a first portion extending in the first direction, overlapping the first drain/source region and the second drain/source region. In some embodiments, the second contact further includes a second portion extending in the second direction, overlapping the first contact, the second drain/source region, the third drain/source region and the second insulating region, being electrically coupled to the first portion, and being electrically insulated from the second drain/source region. In some embodiments, the second contact further includes a third portion extending in the second direction, overlapping the first drain/source region, the fourth drain/source region and the first insulating region, and being electrically insulated from the first drain/source region.

(322) Still another aspect of this description relates to a method of forming an integrated circuit. In some embodiments, the method includes generating, by a processor, a layout of the integrated circuit, and manufacturing the integrated circuit based on the layout. In some embodiments, the generating of the layout includes placing a set of active region patterns on a first level, the set of active region patterns extending in a first direction, each active region pattern of the set of active region patterns being separated from one another in a second direction different from the first direction, the set of active regions patterns corresponding to fabricating a set of active regions in a substrate. In some embodiments, the generating of the layout includes placing a first set of contact patterns on a second level different from the first level, the first set of contact patterns extending in the second direction, overlapping the set of active region patterns, each contact pattern of the first set of contact patterns being separated from an adjacent contact pattern of the first set of contact patterns in the first direction, the first set of contact patterns corresponding to fabricating a first set of contacts, the first set of contacts being electrically coupled to the set of active regions. In some embodiments, the generating of the layout includes placing a second set of contact patterns on a third level different from the first level and the second level, the second set of contact patterns extending in the first direction and the second direction, overlapping the first set of contact patterns, the second set of contact patterns corresponding to fabricating a second set of contacts, at least one contact of the second set of contacts being electrically coupled to at least one contact of the first set of contacts.

(323) The foregoing outlines features of several embodiments so that those skilled in the art may better understand the aspects of the present disclosure. Those skilled in the art should appreciate that they may readily use the present disclosure as a basis for designing or modifying other processes and structures for carrying out the same purposes and/or achieving the same advantages of the embodiments introduced herein. Those skilled in the art should also realize that such equivalent constructions do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure, and that they may make various changes, substitutions, and alterations herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure.

## Claims

1. An integrated circuit comprising: a first active region extending in a first direction, being in a substrate, and being located on a first level, the first active region including a first drain/source region and a second drain/source region; a second active region extending in the first direction, being in the substrate, being located on the first level and being separated from the first active region in a second direction different from the first direction, the second active region including a third drain/source region; a first insulating region over the first drain/source region; a first contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the third drain/source region, being electrically coupled to the third drain/source region and being located on a second level different from the first level; and a second contact being located on a third level different from the first level and the second level, and the second contact comprising: a first portion extending in the first direction, overlapping the first drain/source region and the second drain/source region; and a second portion extending in the second direction, overlapping the first contact, the first drain/source region, the third drain/source region and the first insulating region, and being electrically coupled to the first portion, and being electrically insulated from the first drain/source region.
2. The integrated circuit of claim 1, further comprising: a third contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the second drain/source region, being electrically coupled to the second drain/source region, and being located on the second level.
3. The integrated circuit of claim 2, wherein the first active region further includes a fourth drain/source region.
4. The integrated circuit of claim 3, further comprising: a fourth contact extending in the second

direction, overlapping the fourth drain/source region, being electrically coupled to the fourth drain/source region, being separated from the third contact in the first direction, and being located on the second level; and a first conductive structure extending in at least the first direction, being located on a fourth level different from the first level, the second level and the third level, and overlapping the first portion, the third contact and the fourth contact.

5. The integrated circuit of claim 4, further comprising: a first via over the first portion and the third contact, the first via electrically coupling the first conductive structure and the third contact together, the first via has a first height in a third direction different from the first direction and the second direction; and a second via over the fourth contact, the second via electrically coupling the first conductive structure and the fourth contact together, the second via has a second height in the third direction, and the second height is different from the first height.

6. The integrated circuit of claim 5, wherein the first active region further includes a fifth drain/source region and a sixth drain/source region.

7. The integrated circuit of claim 6, further comprising: a fifth contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the fifth drain/source region, being electrically coupled to the fifth drain/source region, being separated from the third contact in the first direction, and being located on the second level; and a sixth contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the sixth drain/source region, being electrically coupled to the sixth drain/source region, being separated from the third contact in the first direction, and being located on the second level.

8. The integrated circuit of claim 7, further comprising: a first power rail extending in the first direction, being located on the fourth level, overlapping the fifth contact and the sixth contact, and being configured to supply a supply voltage or a reference supply voltage; a third via between the first power rail and the fifth contact, the third via electrically coupling the first power rail and the fifth contact together; and a fourth via between the first power rail and the sixth contact, the fourth via electrically coupling the first power rail and the sixth contact together.

9. The integrated circuit of claim 5, wherein the second active region further includes a fifth drain/source region and a sixth drain/source region.

10. The integrated circuit of claim 9, further comprising: a fifth contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the fifth drain/source region, being electrically coupled to the fifth drain/source region, being separated from the first contact in the first direction, and being located on the second level; and a sixth contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the sixth drain/source region, being electrically coupled to the sixth drain/source region, being separated from the fifth contact in the first direction, and being located on the second level.

11. The integrated circuit of claim 10, further comprising: a first power rail extending in the first direction, being located on the fourth level, overlapping the fifth contact and the sixth contact, and being configured to supply a supply voltage or a reference supply voltage; a third via between the first power rail and the fifth contact, the third via electrically coupling the first power rail and the fifth contact together; and a fourth via between the first power rail and the sixth contact, the fourth via electrically coupling the first power rail and the sixth contact together.

12. The integrated circuit of claim 1, wherein the second contact has an L-shape.

13. An integrated circuit comprising: a first active region extending in a first direction, being in a substrate, and being located on a first level, the first active region including a first drain/source region, and a second drain/source region; a second active region in the substrate, being located on the first level, and being separated from the first active region in a second direction different from the first direction, the second active region including a third drain/source region and a fourth drain/source region; a first insulating region over the first drain/source region; a second insulating region over the second drain/source region, and being separated from the first insulating region in the first direction; a first contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the third drain/source region, and being located on a second level different from the first level; and a second contact being located on a third level different from the first level and the second level, and the

second contact comprising: a first portion extending in the first direction, overlapping the first drain/source region and the second drain/source region; a second portion extending in the second direction, overlapping the first contact, the second drain/source region, the third drain/source region and the second insulating region, being electrically coupled to the first portion, and being electrically insulated from the second drain/source region; and a third portion extending in the second direction, overlapping the first drain/source region, the fourth drain/source region and the first insulating region, and being electrically insulated from the first drain/source region.

14. The integrated circuit of claim 13, wherein the first active region further includes a fifth drain/source region and a sixth drain/source region.

15. The integrated circuit of claim 14, further comprising: a third contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the fourth drain/source region, being located on the second level, and electrically coupling the third portion and the fourth drain/source region together; and a fourth contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the fifth drain/source region, being located on the second level, and being electrically coupled to the fifth drain/source region.

16. The integrated circuit of claim 15, further comprising: a fifth contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the sixth drain/source region, being electrically coupled to the sixth drain/source region, being separated from the fourth contact in the first direction, and being located on the second level; a first conductive structure extending in at least the first direction, being located on a fourth level different from the first level, the second level and the third level, and overlapping the first portion, the fourth contact and the fifth contact; a first via over the first portion, the first via electrically coupling the first conductive structure and the first portion together, the first via has a first height in a third direction different from the first direction and the second direction; and a second via over the fifth contact, the second via electrically coupling the first conductive structure and the fifth contact together, the second via has a second height in the third direction, and the second height is different from the first height.

17. The integrated circuit of claim 13, wherein the second contact has a U-shape.

18. An integrated circuit, comprising: a first active region extending in a first direction, being in a substrate, and being located on a first level, the first active region including a first drain/source region, and a second drain/source region; a second active region in the substrate, being located on the first level, and being separated from the first active region in a second direction different from the first direction, the second active region including a third drain/source region and a fourth drain/source region; a first insulating region over the first drain/source region; a second insulating region over the second drain/source region, and being separated from the first insulating region in the first direction; a first contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the third drain/source region, and being located on a second level different from the first level; and a second contact being located on a third level different from the first level and the second level, and the second contact comprising: a first portion extending in the first direction, overlapping the first drain/source region and the second drain/source region; a second portion extending in the second direction, overlapping the first contact, the second drain/source region, the third drain/source region and the second insulating region, being electrically coupled to the first portion, and being electrically insulated from the second drain/source region; a third portion extending in the second direction, overlapping the first drain/source region, the fourth drain/source region and the first insulating region, and being electrically insulated from the first drain/source region; and a power rail extending in the first direction, being located on a fourth level different from the first level, the second level and the third level, and being configured to supply a supply voltage or a reference supply voltage to the first active region or the second active region.

19. The integrated circuit of claim 18, wherein the first active region further includes a fifth drain/source region and a sixth drain/source region.

20. The integrated circuit of claim 19, further comprising: a third contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the fourth drain/source region, being located on the second level, and

electrically coupling the third portion and the fourth drain/source region together; and a fourth contact extending in the second direction, overlapping the fifth drain/source region, being located on the second level, and being electrically coupled to the fifth drain/source region.

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