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Inventor(s)	Huang; Sin-Yao et al.

Stilted pad structure

Abstract

Various embodiments of the present disclosure are directed towards an integrated circuit (IC) chip comprising a stilted pad structure. A wire underlies a semiconductor substrate on a frontside of the semiconductor substrate. Further, a trench isolation structure extends into the frontside of the semiconductor substrate. The stilted pad structure is inset into a backside of the semiconductor substrate that is opposite the frontside. The stilted pad structure comprises a pad body and a pad protrusion. The pad protrusion underlies the pad body and protrudes from the pad body, through a portion of the semiconductor substrate and the trench isolation structure, towards the wire. The pad body overlies the portion of the semiconductor substrate and is separated from the trench isolation structure by the portion of the semiconductor substrate.

Inventors: Huang; Sin-Yao (Tainan, TW), Shih; Hung-Ling (Tainan, TW), Wu; Kuo-Ming (Zhubei, TW), Hsu; Hung-Wen (Tainan, TW)

Applicant: Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., Ltd. (Hsinchu, TW)

Family ID: 1000008767371

Assignee: Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, Ltd. (Hsinchu, TW)

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Background/Summary

REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION (1) This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 63/138,566, filed on Jan. 18, 2021, the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND

(1) Many modern-day electronic devices include complementary metal-oxide-semiconductor (CMOS) image sensors that convert optical images to digital data representing the optical images. One type of CMOS image sensor commonly used in electronic devices is a backside illuminated (BSI) image sensor. A BSI image sensor comprises an array of photodetectors overlying an interconnect structure and configured to receive radiation on an opposite side as the interconnect structure. This arrangement allows radiation to impinge on the photodetectors unobstructed by conductive features in the interconnect structure, such that the BSI image sensor has high sensitivity to incident radiation.

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 provides a cross-sectional view of some embodiments of an integrated circuit (IC) chip comprising a tilted pad structure.
- (3) FIG. 2 provides a top layout view of some embodiments of the IC chip of FIG. 1.
- (4) FIGS. 3A-3H provide cross-sectional views of some alternative embodiments of the IC chip of FIG. 1 in which the tilted pad structure is varied.
- (5) FIGS. 4A-4C provide top layout views of some embodiments of contacts of FIG. 3H.
- (6) FIG. 5 provides a cross-sectional view of some embodiments of an IC package in which the IC chip of FIG. 1 is bonded to a carrier substrate.
- (7) FIGS. 6A-6C provide cross-sectional views of some alternative embodiments of the IC package of FIG. 5.
- (8) FIG. 7 provides a cross-sectional view of some embodiments of a three-dimensional (3D) IC package in which the IC chip of FIG. 5 and a second IC chip are bonded together frontside to frontside.
- (9) FIGS. 8A and 8B provide cross-sectional views of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC package of FIG. 7 in which a pad wire is in the second IC chip.
- (10) FIG. 9 provides a cross-sectional view of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC package of FIG. 7 in which the IC chip is employed as a BSI image sensor.
- (11) FIG. 10 provides a cross-sectional view of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC package of FIG. 7 in which the IC chip and the second IC chip are bonded frontside to backside.
- (12) FIGS. 11A and 11B illustrate cross-sectional views of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC package of FIG. 10.

- (13) FIG. 12 provides a cross-sectional view of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC package of FIG. 7 in which a third IC chip is bonded to the second IC chip.
- (14) FIGS. 13A and 13B illustrate cross-sectional views of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC package of FIG. 12.
- (15) FIG. 14 illustrates a cross-sectional view of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC chip of FIG. 12 in which the second IC chip is bonded backside to frontside to the IC chip.
- (16) FIGS. 15-29 provide a series of cross-sectional views of some embodiments of a method for forming an IC chip comprising a stilted pad structure.
- (17) FIG. 30 provides a block diagram of some embodiments of the method of FIGS. 15-29.
- (18) FIGS. 31-33 provide a series of cross-sectional views of some first alternative embodiments of the method of FIGS. 15-29 in which the stilted pad structure fully fills an opening within which the stilted pad structure is formed.
- (19) FIGS. 34-39 provide a series of cross-sectional views of some second alternative embodiments of the method of FIGS. 15-29 in which a dielectric filler layer overlies the stilted pad structure and fills unfilled portions of an opening within which the stilted pad structure is formed.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

- (20) The present disclosure provides many different embodiments, or examples, for implementing different features of this disclosure. Specific examples of components and arrangements are described below to simplify the present disclosure. These are, of course, merely examples and are not intended to be limiting. 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.
- (21) 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.
- (22) An integrated circuit (IC) chip may comprise a pad structure inset into a backside of a semiconductor substrate. Such an IC chip may, for example, correspond to a backside illuminated (BSI) image sensor. According to a method for forming the IC chip, a trench isolation structure is formed extending into a frontside of the semiconductor substrate. Further, an interconnect structure is formed covering the trench isolation structure on the frontside. A first etch is performed selectively into the semiconductor substrate from the backside to form a first opening exposing the trench isolation structure. A second etch is performed selectively from the backside to form a second opening. The second opening has a lesser width than the first opening and extends from the first opening, through the trench isolation, to a wire in the interconnect structure. The pad structure is formed in the first and second openings. The pad structure comprises a pad region in the first opening and further comprises a pad protrusion protruding from the pad region, through the second opening, to the wire.
- (23) A challenge with the method is that the pad structure has poor bondability and is hence subject to delamination. Bondability may, for example, be poor because of a small bond area between the pad protrusion and surrounding structure. Another challenge with the method is that the pad structure is large and is inset deep into the backside of the semiconductor substrate, such that backside topography has a high degree of variation. The high degree of variation decreases the

process window (e.g., resiliency) for forming other structures on the backside. For example, a metal grid and color filters may be formed on the backside when the IC chip corresponds to a BSI image sensor. To alleviate this challenge, a dielectric filler layer may be formed filling unfilled portions of the first opening and a third etch may be performed selectively into the dielectric filler layer to form a third open exposing the pad structure. However, this adds processing steps and increases costs. Further, these processing steps vary depending on a thickness of the semiconductor substrate and are hence subject to costly and timely tuning of parameters for variations in the thickness.

(24) Various embodiments of the present disclosure are directed towards a stilted pad structure, as well as a method for forming the stilted pad structure. According to some embodiments of the method, a first etch is performed selectively into a backside of a semiconductor substrate to form a first opening. The first opening overlies and is spaced from a trench isolation structure, which extends into a frontside of the semiconductor substrate. A second etch is performed selectively from the backside to form a second opening. The second opening extends from the first opening, through a portion of the semiconductor substrate, to the trench isolation structure. Further, the second opening has a lesser width than the first opening and exposes a sidewall of the semiconductor substrate. A backside spacer layer is deposited on the sidewall, and a third etch is performed blanketing the backside. The third etch forms backside spacers from the backside spacer layer and extends the second opening to a wire underlying the semiconductor substrate on the frontside. The stilted pad structure is formed in the first and second openings. The stilted pad structure comprises a pad region in the first opening and further comprises a pad protrusion protruding from the pad region, through the second opening, to the wire.

(25) Because the first opening is spaced from the trench isolation structure, a length of the protrusion is large and hence the bond area between the protrusion and surrounding structure is large. The large bond area may, in turn, increase bondability of the stilted pad structure and reduce the likelihood of delamination. Because a thickness of the semiconductor substrate is traversed by a combination of the first and second etches, the first etch may extend into backside of the semiconductor substrate to a depth independent of the thickness. As a result, the first etch is not subject to costly and timely tuning of parameters for variations in the thickness. Further, a depth to which the stilted pad structure is inset into the backside of the semiconductor substrate may be small and backside topography may have a small degree of variation. Because of the small degree of variation, the process window (e.g., resiliency) for forming other structures on the backside is large and a dielectric filler layer may be omitted from unfilled portions of the first opening. Further, to the extent that a dielectric filler layer is formed in unfilled portions of the first opening, the corresponding processing steps do not vary depending on the thickness of the semiconductor substrate and are hence not subject to costly and timely tuning of parameters for variations in the thickness.

(26) With reference to FIG. 1, a cross-sectional view **100** of some embodiments of an integrated circuit (IC) chip comprising a stilted pad structure **102** is provided. The stilted pad structure **102** is inset into a backside **104b** of a semiconductor substrate **104** and overlies a frontside trench isolation structure **106**. The frontside trench isolation structure **106** extends into a frontside **104f** of the semiconductor substrate **104** that is opposite the backside. The stilted pad structure **102** comprises a pad body **102b** and a pair of pad protrusions **102p**.

(27) The pad body **102b** is exposed from the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** and overlies a pad portion **104p** of the semiconductor substrate **104**. Further, the pad body **102b** is separated from sidewalls of surrounding structure and has a top that is flat, except for indents **102i** respectively overlying the pad protrusions **102p**. In alternative embodiments, the indents **102i** are omitted from the top of the pad body **102b**.

(28) The pad protrusions **102p** are respectively on opposite sides of the pad body **102b** and extend from a bottom of the pad body **102b** to a pad wire **108p**. The pad wire **108p** is part of a frontside

interconnect structure **110** on the frontside **104f** of the semiconductor substrate **104** and is embedded in a frontside interconnect dielectric layer **112**. By extending to the pad wire **108p**, the pad protrusions **102p** electrically couples the pad body **102b** to the pad wire **108p**. Further, the pad protrusions **102p** bond with the frontside interconnect dielectric layer **112**, the frontside trench isolation structure **106**, and the pad portion **104p** of the semiconductor substrate **104** to secure the stilted pad structure **102** in place.

(29) Because the pad body **102b** is separated from the frontside trench isolation structure **106** by the pad portion **104p** of the semiconductor substrate **104**, positioning of the pad body **102b** may be independent of variations in a thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104**. Instead of varying the positioning of the pad body **102b** for variations in the thickness T_s , a thickness T_{pp} of the pad portion **104p** may instead be varied.

(30) Because the positioning of the pad body **102b** is independent of variations in the thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104**, the pad body **102b** may be arranged close to the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** regardless of the thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104**. As a result, topography on the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** may have a small degree of variation at the stilted pad structure **102**. Because of the small degree of variation, the process window (e.g., resiliency) for forming other structures on the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** may be large. Further, a dielectric filler layer leveling the backside **104b** may be omitted, thereby reducing manufacturing costs and increasing manufacturing throughput.

(31) Also, because the pad body **102b** is separated from the frontside trench isolation structure **106** by the pad portion **104p** of the semiconductor substrate **104**, a length L of the pad protrusions **102p** may be large (e.g., relative to a pad structure in which the pad portion **104p** is omitted). As a result, the bond area between the pad protrusions **102p** and surrounding structure may be large. The large bond area may, in turn, increase bondability of the stilted pad structure **102** and reduce the likelihood of delamination. Also, because the length L is large, the pad protrusions **102p** are reminiscent of stilts, whereby the pad protrusions **102p** may also be referred to as stilts and the stilted pad structure **102** is said to be stilted.

(32) With continued reference to FIG. **1**, the semiconductor substrate **104** has a recessed surface **104r** extending laterally along a bottom of the pad body **102b** from a first side of the stilted pad structure **102** to a second side of the stilted pad structure **102** that is opposite the first side. Further, the pad protrusions **102p** extend through the recessed surface **104r**. The recessed surface **104r** is recessed relative to a top surface of the semiconductor substrate **104** by a separation A , and is elevated relative to a bottom surface of the semiconductor substrate **104** by a separation B . Further, a sum of the separations A and B equals the thickness T_s .

(33) A backside dielectric layer **114** is on the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** and partially defines a pad opening **116** within which the stilted pad structure **102** is exposed. As such, the backside dielectric layer **114** and the semiconductor substrate **104** define a first common sidewall and a second common sidewall. The first and second common sidewalls are respectively on opposite sides of the stilted pad structure **102**, and the recessed surface **104r** extends laterally from the first common sidewall to the second common sidewall.

(34) A backside liner layer **118** covers the backside dielectric layer **114**. Further, the backside liner layer **118** lines the first and second common sidewalls and the recessed surface **104r**. Portions of the backside liner layer **118** on the recessed surface **104r** separate the recessed surface **104r** from the stilted pad structure **102**.

(35) Backside spacers **120** are on sidewalls of the backside liner layer **118** at the first and second common sidewalls and are further on sidewalls of the semiconductor substrate **104** at the pad protrusions **102p**. Backside spacers **120** at the first and second common sidewalls are separated from the stilted pad structure **102** by the pad opening **116**. Further, backside spacers **120** at the pad protrusions **102p** separate the pad protrusions **102p** from the semiconductor substrate **104** and the

backside liner layer **118**.

(36) In some embodiments, the thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104** is about 1-100 micrometers, about 1-50 micrometers, about 50-100 micrometers, or some other suitable value. In some embodiments, the thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104** is about 3.5 micrometers, about 5 micrometers, about 6 micrometers, or some other suitable value.

(37) In some embodiments, the separation A is less than the separation B. In other embodiments, the separation A is greater than or equal to the separation B. In some embodiments, the separation A is about 3 micrometers or is less than about 3 micrometers, and/or the separation B is about 3 micrometers or is more than about 3 micrometers. If the separation A is too large (e.g., greater than about 3 micrometers or some other suitable value), a backside topography may have a large degree of variation that may decrease the process window (e.g., resiliency) for forming other structures on the backside **104b**.

(38) In some embodiments, the stilted pad structure **102** is or comprises metal and/or some other suitable conductive material(s). The metal may, for example, be or comprise aluminum copper, copper, aluminum, tungsten, some other suitable metal(s), or any combination of the foregoing. In some embodiments, a width W_p of the pad protrusions **102p** is about 5 micrometers, about 2-10 micrometers, about 10-30 micrometers, some other suitable value, or any combination of the foregoing. In some embodiments, the length L of the pad protrusions **102p** is about 6 micrometers, about 5-50 micrometers, about 50-100 micrometers, some other suitable value, or any combination of the foregoing.

(39) In some embodiments, the semiconductor substrate **104** is or comprises a bulk substrate of semiconductor material, a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) substrate, or some other suitable type of semiconductor substrate. In some embodiments, the semiconductor substrate **104** is or comprises silicon, silicon germanium, germanium, some other suitable type(s) of semiconductor material, or any combination of the foregoing. For example, the semiconductor substrate **104** may be a bulk substrate of monocrystalline silicon or silicon germanium.

(40) In some embodiments, the frontside trench isolation structure **106** is or comprises a dielectric material and/or some other suitable material. The dielectric material may, for example, be or comprise silicon oxide and/or some other suitable dielectric material(s). In some embodiments, the frontside trench isolation structure **106** is a shallow trench isolation (STI) structure, a deep trench isolation (STI) structure, some other suitable type of trench isolation structure, or any combination of the foregoing.

(41) In some embodiments, the pad wire **108p** is or comprises metal and/or some other suitable conductive material(s). The metal may, for example, be or comprise aluminum copper, copper, aluminum, some other suitable metal(s), or any combination of the foregoing. In some embodiments, the frontside interconnect dielectric layer **112** is or comprises silicon oxide, a low k dielectric material, some other suitable dielectric(s), or any combination of the foregoing.

(42) In some embodiments, the backside dielectric layer **114** is or comprises silicon oxide, a high k dielectric material, some other suitable dielectric(s), or any combination of the foregoing. The high k dielectric material may, for example, be or comprise aluminum oxide (e.g., Al.sub.2O.sub.3), hafnium oxide (e.g., HfO.sub.2), tantalum oxide (e.g., Ta.sub.2O.sub.5), some other suitable high k dielectric(s), or any combination of the foregoing. In some embodiments, the backside dielectric layer **114** is a multilayer film. For example, the backside dielectric layer **114** may comprise multiple high k dielectric layers vertically stacked and an oxide layer covering the multiple high k dielectric layers.

(43) In some embodiments, the backside liner layer **118** is or comprises silicon nitride, silicon oxide, some other suitable dielectric(s), or any combination of the foregoing. In some embodiments, the backside liner layer **118** is a multilayer film. For example, the backside liner layer **118** may comprise an oxide layer and a silicon nitride layer covering the oxide layer. As another example, the backside liner layer **118** may be or comprise an oxide-nitride-oxide (ONO)

multilayer film. In some embodiments, the backside spacers **120** are or comprises silicon oxide, silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride, some other suitable dielectric(s), or any combination of the foregoing.

(44) With reference to FIG. 2, a top layout view **200** of some embodiments of the stilted pad structure **102** of FIG. 1 is provided. In some embodiments, the cross-sectional view **100** of FIG. 1 is taken along line C-C. The pad protrusions **102p** have line-shaped top layouts that are laterally elongated in parallel. In some alternative embodiments, the pad protrusions **102p** have some other suitable top layouts. Further, some in alternative embodiments, the pad protrusions **102p** correspond to segments of a ring-shaped pad protrusion.

(45) With reference to FIGS. 3A-3H, cross-sectional views **300A-300H** of some alternative embodiments of the IC chip of FIG. 1 are provided.

(46) In FIG. 3A, a dielectric filler layer **302** overlies the stilted pad structure **102** and fills the indents **102i** of FIG. 1 and the gaps of FIG. 1 at sides of the stilted pad structure **102**. Further, the dielectric filler layer **302** localizes the pad opening **116** directly over the pad body **102b** and has a top surface that is level with, or about level with, a top surface of the backside liner layer **118**. In some embodiments, the dielectric filler layer **302** is or comprises silicon oxide, silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride, some other suitable dielectrics, or any combination of the foregoing.

(47) Because the dielectric filler layer **302** reduces a size of the pad opening **116** and has a top surface level with, or about level with, the top surface of the backside liner layer **118**, backside topography may have a small degree of variation at the stilted pad structure **102**. Because of the small degree of variation, the process window (e.g., resiliency) for forming other structures on the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** may be large.

(48) As described above, positioning of the pad body **102b** is independent of variations in the thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104** because the pad body **102b** is separated from the frontside trench isolation structure **106** by the pad portion **104p**. Instead of varying the positioning of the pad body **102b** for variations in the thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104**, the thickness T_{pp} of the pad portion **104p** may instead be varied. Because the positioning of the pad body **102b** may be independent of the variations in the thickness T_s , the dielectric filler layer **302** may not vary with variations in the thickness T_s . Hence, formation of the dielectric filler layer **302** may not be subject to costly and time-consuming tuning of process parameters for variations in the thickness T_s .

(49) In FIG. 3B, the pad opening **116** is omitted and a top surface of the pad body **102b** is level with, or about level with, a top surface of the backside liner layer **118**. Accordingly, backside topography may have a small degree of variation at the stilted pad structure **102**. Because of the small degree of variation, the process window (e.g., resiliency) for forming other structures on the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** may be large.

(50) In FIG. 3C, the backside spacers **120** at the pad protrusions **102p** further extend through the frontside trench isolation structure **106**.

(51) In FIG. 3D, the first and second common sidewalls defined by the semiconductor substrate **104** and the backside dielectric layer **114** are angled. Further, the sidewalls of the semiconductor substrate **104** at the pad protrusions **102p** are angled. In alternative embodiments, the first and second common sidewalls are vertical and/or the sidewalls of the semiconductor substrate **104** at the pad protrusions **102p** are vertical.

(52) In FIG. 3E, the backside liner layer **118** has a top surface that is level with, or about level with, a top surface of the backside dielectric layer **114**. As such, the backside dielectric layer **114** is not covered by the backside liner layer **118**.

(53) In FIG. 3F, the backside dielectric layer **114** comprises a multilayer high k dielectric film **114a** and an oxide dielectric layer **114b** covering the multilayer high k dielectric film **114a**. The multilayer high k dielectric film **114a** comprises three high k dielectric layers that are vertically stacked. In alternative embodiments, the multilayer high k dielectric film **114a** comprises more or

less high k dielectric layers. Note that the high k dielectric layers of the multilayer high k dielectric film **114a** are not individually labeled.

(54) In some embodiments, the high k dielectric layers of the multilayer high k dielectric film **114a** have dielectric constants greater than that of the oxide dielectric layer **114b**. In some embodiments, each high k dielectric layer of the multilayer high k dielectric film **114a** is a different high k material than each other high k dielectric layer of the multilayer high k dielectric film **114a**. In some embodiments, the oxide dielectric layer **114b** is or comprise silicon oxide and/or some other suitable dielectric(s).

(55) In FIG. 3G, the stilted pad structure **102** has a single pad protrusion **102p**.

(56) In FIG. 3H, the pad protrusions **102p** protrude from the pad body **102b** to a plurality of pad contacts **304p**, and the plurality of pad contacts **304p** extend from the pad wire **108p** respectively to the pad protrusions **102p**. As such, the pad contacts **304p** electrically couple the pad wire **108p** to the pad protrusions **102p**. Additionally, an interface at which the pad contacts **304p** directly contact the pad protrusions **102p** is level with, or about level with, a bottom surface of the semiconductor substrate **104** and/or a bottom surface of the frontside trench isolation structure **106**.

(57) As seen hereafter, an etch may be performed to form an opening within which the pad protrusions **102p** are formed. If the opening extends to and exposes the pad wire **108p**, and if a thickness of the pad wire **108p** is too small (e.g., as may be the case at advanced process nodes), over etching may lead to the opening extending fully through the pad wire **108p**. The over etching may lead to poor electrical contact between the pad wire **108p** and the pad protrusions **102p**. For example, only sidewalls of the pad protrusions **102p** may contact the pad wire **108p**, whereby the contact area may be small and contact resistance may be high. Further, the over etching may lead to damage to structure underlying the pad wire **108p** and/or electrical coupling of the stilted pad structure **102** to unintended conductive features under the pad wire **108p**.

(58) Because the pad protrusions **102p** are separated from the pad wire **108p** by the pad contacts **304p**, the pad contacts **304p** may serve as an etch stop for the etch. This may, in turn, protect the pad wire **108p** and alleviate the foregoing concerns.

(59) In some embodiments, the pad contacts **304p** are contact vias or some other suitable type of contact structure. In some embodiments, the pad contacts **304p** are or comprise metal and/or some other suitable conductive material(s). The metal may, for example, be or comprise copper, tungsten, some other suitable metal(s), or any combination of the foregoing.

(60) While FIGS. 3C-3H describe variations to the IC chip of FIG. 1, the variations may also be applied to the IC chip of FIG. 3A and/or the IC chip of FIG. 3B. For example, the pad protrusions **102p** of FIG. 3A may alternatively be separated from the pad wire **108p** by pad contacts **304p** as in FIG. 3H. As another example, FIG. 3B may alternatively have the backside spacers **120** at the pad protrusions **102p** extending through the frontside trench isolation structure **106** as in FIG. 3C.

(61) With reference FIGS. 4A-4C, top layout views **400A-400C** of some embodiments of the pad contacts **304p** of FIG. 3H are provided. In some embodiments, the cross-sectional view **300H** of FIG. 3H is taken along line D-D.

(62) In FIG. 4A, the pad contacts **304p** are dot shaped and are arranged in a plurality of rows and a plurality of columns. Further, the pad contacts **304p** are arranged in fifteen rows and three columns at each of the pad protrusions **102p**. In alternative embodiments, the pad contacts **304p** are in more or less rows and/or more or less columns at each of the pad protrusions **102p**.

(63) In FIG. 4B, the pad contacts **304p** are line or strip shaped. Further, the pad contacts **304p** are arranged in three columns at each of the pad protrusions **102p**. In alternative embodiments, the pad contacts **304p** are in more or less columns at each of the pad protrusions **102p**.

(64) In FIG. 4C, the pad contacts **304p** are grid shaped.

(65) With reference to FIG. 5, a cross-sectional view **500** of some embodiments of an IC package is provided in which the IC chip of FIG. 1 (hereafter referred to as the first IC chip **502**) has additional structure and is bonded to a carrier substrate **504**.

(66) A plurality of semiconductor devices **506** is on the frontside **104f** of the semiconductor substrate **104**, between the semiconductor substrate **104** and the frontside interconnect structure **110**. The semiconductor devices **506** are separated by the frontside trench isolation structure **106** and comprise individual gate stacks **508**. While not shown, the gate stacks **508** may, for example, comprise individual gate electrodes and individual gate dielectric respectively separating the gate electrodes from the semiconductor substrate **104**. The semiconductor devices **506** may, for example, be or comprise metal-oxide-semiconductor field-effect transistors (MOSFETs), fin field-effect transistors (FinFETs), gate-all-around field-effect transistors (GAA FETs), some other suitable type of semiconductor devices, or any combination of the foregoing.

(67) The frontside interconnect structure **110** comprises a plurality of wires **108**, a plurality of vias **510**, and a plurality of contacts **304** embedded in the frontside interconnect dielectric layer **112**. Further, the plurality of wires **108** comprises the pad wire **108p**. The wires **108**, the vias **510**, and the contacts **304** are stacked to define conductive paths leading from and interconnecting the semiconductor devices **506** and the stilted pad structure **102**. Further, the wires **108**, the vias **510**, and the contacts **304** are grouped into levels corresponding to elevation below the semiconductor substrate **104**. The contacts **304** have a single contact level, whereas the wires **108** and the vias **510** respectively have a plurality of wire levels and a plurality of via levels. The wire levels and the via levels are alternatingly stacked between the contact level and the carrier substrate **504**.

(68) In some embodiments, the wires **108** and/or the vias **510** are or comprises metal and/or some other suitable conductive material(s). The metal may, for example, be or comprise aluminum copper, copper, aluminum, some other suitable metal(s), or any combination of the foregoing. In some embodiments, the contacts **304** are contacts vias or some other suitable type of contact structure. In some embodiments, the contacts **304** are or comprises metal and/or some other suitable conductive material(s). The metal may, for example, be or comprise tungsten and/or some other suitable metal(s).

(69) The carrier substrate **504** underlies the first IC chip **502** on the frontside **104f** of the semiconductor substrate **104**. In some embodiments, the carrier substrate **504** is a bulk substrate of semiconductor material or some other suitable type of substrate. The semiconductor material may, for example, be or comprise silicon, silicon germanium, germanium, some other suitable type(s) of semiconductor material, or any combination of the foregoing.

(70) A wire bond structure **512** is on the stilted pad structure **102** to provide electrical coupling from the stilted pad structure **102** to an external device or structure. In alternative embodiments, some other suitable type of conductive structure is on the stilted pad structure **102** to provide electrical coupling from the stilted pad structure **102** to the external device or structure. Further, the frontside interconnect structure **110** provides electrical coupling from the stilted pad structure **102** to the semiconductor devices **506**. Hence, the frontside interconnect structure **110**, the stilted pad structure **102**, and the wire bond structure **512** may coordinate to define conductive paths between the external device or structure and the semiconductor devices **506**.

(71) With reference to FIGS. **6A** and **6B**, cross-sectional views **600A** and **600B** of some alternative embodiments of the IC package of FIG. **5** are provided.

(72) In FIG. **6A**, the pad wire **108p** is in a wire level that is closest to the carrier substrate **504**. In some alternative embodiments, the pad wire **108p** may be in any other wire level of the frontside interconnect structure **110**.

(73) In FIG. **6B**, the first IC chip **502** is employed as a BSI image sensor. A plurality of photodetectors **602** extend into the frontside **104f** of the semiconductor substrate **104**, and the photodetectors **602** are separated by the frontside trench isolation structure **106**. Further, the backside dielectric layer **114** protrudes into the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** to the frontside trench isolation structure **106** to define a backside trench isolation structure **604** further separating the photodetectors **602**. In some embodiments, the frontside trench isolation structure **106** is a STI structure, whereas the backside trench isolation structure **604** is a DTI

structure. Other suitable types of trench isolation structures are, however, amenable in alternative embodiments.

(74) A plurality of color filters **606** and a composite grid **608** overlie the photodetectors **602** on the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104**. The color filters **606** are inset into the composite grid **608** and are each configured to pass first wavelengths of radiation while blocking second wavelengths of radiation.

(75) The composite grid **608** comprises a first grid dielectric layer **610**, a second grid dielectric layer **612**, and a grid metal layer **614** between the first and second grid dielectric layers **610**, **612**. The grid metal layer **614** reflects incident radiation to direct the radiation towards the photodetectors **602**. Further, the first and second grid dielectric layers **610**, **612** have refractive indexes less than the color filters **606** to promote total internal reflection (TIR). Hence, the first and second grid dielectric layers **610**, **612** may reflect incident radiation by TIR to direct the radiation towards the photodetectors **602**. The aforementioned reflection may, in turn, enhance absorption of radiation received from the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104**.

(76) In FIG. **6C**, the pad protrusions **102p** protrude to pad vias **510p** in a via level closest to the carrier substrate **504**. In alternative embodiments, the pad vias **510p** are in any other via level. For the same reasons described with regard to FIG. **3H**, the pad vias **510p** may protect the pad wire **108p** from over etching.

(77) With reference to FIG. **7**, a cross-sectional view **700** of some embodiments of a three-dimensional (3D) IC package is provided in which the first IC chip **502** of FIG. **5** is bonded to a second IC chip **702**, instead of the carrier substrate **504** of FIG. **5**, and has additional structure to facilitate the bond. The second IC chip **702** is as the first IC chip **502** is described, except that the second IC chip **702** lacks the stilted pad structure **102**. Hence, constituents of the first and second IC chips **502**, **702** share reference numbers.

(78) The bonding is performed by hybrid bonding and bonds the first and second IC chips **502**, **702** together frontside to frontside at a bond interface **704**. Further, to facilitate the bonding, the first and second IC chips **502**, **702** comprises individual hybrid bond pads **706** and individual hybrid bond vias **708**. In some embodiments, the hybrid bond pads **706** and the hybrid bond vias **708** are or comprise aluminum copper, copper, aluminum, some other suitable metal(s), or any combination of the foregoing.

(79) The hybrid bond pads **706** and the hybrid bond vias **708** are inset respectively into the frontside interconnect dielectric layers **112** of the first and second IC chips **502**, **702**. The frontside interconnect dielectric layers **112** of the first and second IC chips **502**, **702** directly contact at the bond interface **704**. Further, the hybrid bond pads **706** of the first IC chip **502** directly contact the hybrid bond pads **706** of the second IC chip **702** at the bond interface **704**. The hybrid bond vias **708** of the first IC chip **502** extend respectively from hybrid bond pads **706** of the first IC chip **502** respectively to wires **108** of the first IC chip **502**. The hybrid bond vias **708** of the second IC chip **702** extend respectively from hybrid bond pads **706** of the second IC chip **702** respectively to wires **108** of the second IC chip **702**.

(80) With reference to FIGS. **8A** and **8B**, cross-sectional views **800A**, **800B** of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC package of FIG. **7** are provided in which the pad wire **108p** is in the frontside interconnect structure **110** of the second IC chip **702**. As a result, the pad protrusions **102p** extend through frontside interconnect structure **110** of the first IC chip **502** to the frontside interconnect structure **110** of the second IC chip **702**.

(81) In FIG. **8A**, the pad protrusions **102p** extend to the pad wire **108p**. Additionally, the pad wire **108p** is in a wire level of the second IC chip **702** that is closest to the bond interface **704**. In alternative embodiments, the pad wire **108p** is in some other wire level of the first or second IC chip **502**, **702**.

(82) In FIG. **8B**, the pad protrusions **102p** extend to pad vias **510p**, which extend from the pad wire **108p** to the pad protrusions **102p**. In alternative embodiments, the pad wire **108p** and the pad vias

510p are in some other wire and via levels of the first or second IC chip **502**, **702**.

(83) While the pad protrusions **102p** extend to the pad wire **108p** and the pad vias **510p** respectively in FIGS. **8A** and **8B**, the pad protrusions **102p** may alternatively extend to hybrid bond vias **708**, hybrid bond pads **706**, or contacts **304** in either the first or second IC chip **502**, **702**. Increased thickness of hybrid bond pads **706** may alleviate over etching concerns discussed with regard to FIG. **3H**. Similarly, hybrid bond vias **708** and contacts **304** may alleviate over etching concerns discussed with regard to FIG. **3H**.

(84) With reference to FIG. **9**, a cross-sectional view **900** of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC package of FIG. **7** is provided in which the first IC chip **502** is employed as a BSI image sensor as described with regard to FIG. **6B**. Hence, the first IC chip **502** comprises a plurality of photodetectors **602** extending into the frontside **104f** of the first IC chip **502**. Further, a plurality of color filters **606** and a composite grid **608** overlie the photodetectors **602** on the backside **104b** of the first IC chip **502**.

(85) With reference to FIG. **10**, a cross-sectional view **1000** of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC package of FIG. **7** is provided in which the second IC chip **702** is bonded backside to frontside to the first IC chip **502**. As such, the second IC chip **702** comprises a backside interconnect structure **1002** on the backside **104b** of the second IC chip **702**.

(86) The backside interconnect structure **1002** comprises the hybrid bond pads **706** of the second IC chip **702** and the hybrid bond vias **708** of the second IC chip **702**. As such, the hybrid bond pads **706** of the second IC chip **702** and the hybrid bond vias **708** of the second IC chip **702** are on the backside **104b** of the second IC chip **702** rather than the frontside **104f** of the second IC chip **702**. Further, the backside interconnect structure **1002** comprises a plurality of wires **108** between the hybrid bond vias **708** of the second IC chip **702** and the semiconductor substrate **104** of the second IC chip **702**. In some alternative embodiments, the backside interconnect structure **1002** comprises multiple levels of wires and further comprises one or more levels of vias (not shown) alternately stacked.

(87) A backside interconnect dielectric layer **1004** accommodates the hybrid bond pads **706** of the second IC chip **702**, the hybrid bond vias **708** of the second IC chip **702**, and the wires **108** of the second IC chip **702**. Further, a through substrate via (TSV) **1006** extends from the frontside interconnect structure **110** of the second IC chip **702**, through the semiconductor substrate **104** of the second IC chip **702**, to the backside interconnect structure **1002** to provide electrical coupling therebetween. In some embodiments, the wires **108** and/or the TSV **1006** are or comprises metal and/or some other suitable conductive material(s). The metal may, for example, be or comprise aluminum copper, copper, aluminum, tungsten, some other suitable metal(s), or any combination of the foregoing.

(88) A carrier substrate **504** underlies the second IC chip **702** on the frontside **104f** of the second IC chip **702** and is bonded to the second IC chip **702**. The carrier substrate may, for example, be as described with regard to FIG. **5**.

(89) With reference to FIGS. **11A** and **11B**, cross-sectional views **1100A**, **1100B** of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC package of FIG. **10** are provided.

(90) In FIG. **11A**, the pad wire **108p** is in the backside interconnect structure **1002** of the second IC chip **702**. In alternative embodiments, the pad protrusions **102p** are separated from the pad wire **108p** by the hybrid bond vias **708** of the second IC chip **702**, such that the hybrid bond vias **708** extend from the pad wire **108p** to the pad protrusions **102p**.

(91) In FIG. **11B**, the pad wire **108p** is in the frontside interconnect structure **110** of the second IC chip **702** in a wire level of the second IC chip **702** that is closest to the bond interface **704**. As a result, the pad protrusions **102p** extends through the semiconductor substrate **104** of the second IC chip **702** to the pad wire **108p**. In alternative embodiments, the pad wire **108p** is at a different wire level in the frontside interconnect structure **110** of the second IC chip **702**. In alternative embodiments, the pad protrusions **102p** extend to a vias **510** or contacts **304** of the second IC chip

702, which separate the pad protrusions **102p** from the pad wire **108p** and extend from the pad protrusions **102p** to the pad wire **108p**.

(92) Through substrate spacers **1102** line the pad protrusions **102p** at the semiconductor substrate **104** of the second IC chip **702** to separate the pad protrusions **102p** from the semiconductor substrate **104** of the second IC chip **702**. The through substrate spacers **1102** may, for example, be or comprise silicon oxide and/or some other suitable dielectric(s).

(93) With reference to FIG. **12**, a cross-sectional view **1200** of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC package of FIG. **7** is provided in which the second IC chip **702** is hybrid bonded to the first IC chip **502** on the frontside **104f** of the second IC chip **702** and is hybrid bonded to a third IC chip **1202** on a backside **104b** of the second IC chip **702**.

(94) The second IC chip **702** comprises the backside interconnect structure **1002** as described with regard to FIG. **10** and further comprises hybrid bond pads **706** and hybrid bond vias **708** on both the frontside **104f** of the second IC chip **702** and the backside **104b** of the second IC die. Further, the TSV **1006** extends through the semiconductor substrate **104** of the second IC chip **702** from the backside interconnect structure **1002** of the second IC chip **702** to the frontside interconnect structure **110** of the second IC chip **702**.

(95) The third IC chip **1202** is as the first IC chip **502** is described, except that the third IC chip **1202** lacks the stilted pad structure **102**. Accordingly, constituents of the first and third IC chips **502**, **1202** share reference numbers.

(96) With reference to FIGS. **13A** and **13B**, cross-sectional views **1300A**, **1300B** of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC package of FIG. **12** is provided.

(97) In FIG. **13A**, the pad wire **108p** is in the backside interconnect structure **1002** of the second IC chip **702**. As a result, the pad protrusions **102p** extends through the semiconductor substrate **104** of the second IC chip **702** and is separated from the semiconductor substrate **104** of the second IC chip **702** by the through substrate spacers **1102**.

(98) In FIG. **13B**, the pad wire **108p** is in the frontside interconnect structure **110** of the third IC chip **1202**. As a result, the pad protrusions **102p** extends through the semiconductor substrate **104** of the second IC chip **702** and is separated from the semiconductor substrate **104** by the through substrate spacers **1102**. In alternative embodiments, the pad wire **108p** is at a different wire level in the frontside interconnect structure **110** of the third IC chip **1202**. In alternative embodiments, the pad protrusions **102p** extend to vias **510** of the third IC chip **1202**, which separate the pad protrusions **102p** from the pad wire **108p** and extend from the pad protrusions **102p** to the pad wire **108p**.

(99) With reference to FIG. **14**, a cross-sectional view **1400** of some alternative embodiments of the 3D IC chip of FIG. **12** is provided in which the second IC chip **702** is bonded backside to frontside to the first IC chip **502**. As such, the backside interconnect structure **1002** of the second IC chip **702** overlies the semiconductor substrate **104** of the second IC chip **702**, and the frontside interconnect structure **110** of the second IC chip **702** underlies the semiconductor substrate **104**. Additionally, the second IC chip **702** comprises a stilted pad structure **102** similar to the first IC chip **502**.

(100) The hybrid bond vias **708** and the hybrid bond pads **706** are larger at the first and second IC chips **502**, **702** than at the second and third IC chips **702**, **1202**. Further, a hybrid bond via **708** of the second IC chip **702** extends from a hybrid bond pad **706** of the second IC chip **702** to the stilted pad structure **102** of the second IC chip.

(101) The stilted pad structure **102** of the first IC chip **502** is configured as in FIG. **1**, whereas the stilted pad structure **102** of the second IC chip **702** is configured as in FIG. **3B**. In alternative embodiments, the stilted pad structure **102** of the first IC chip **502** and/or the stilted pad structure **102** of the second IC chip **702** has/have some other suitable configuration. In alternative embodiments, the stilted pad structure **102** of the second IC chip **702** protrudes to some other wire level of the second IC chip **702** or protrudes to a wire level in the third IC chip **1202**. In alternative

embodiments, the stilted pad structure **102** of the first IC chip **502** is separated from the pad wire **108p** of the first IC chip **502** by contacts **304**, or vias **510**, of the first IC chip **502**, which extend from the pad wire **108p** to the pad protrusions **102p**. Similarly, in alternative embodiments, the stilted pad structure **102** of the second IC chip **702** is separated from the pad wire **108p** of the second IC chip **702** by contacts **304**, or vias **510**, of the second IC chip **702**, which extend from the pad wire **108p** to the pad protrusions **102p**.

(102) While FIGS. **5**, **6A-6C**, **7**, **8A**, **8B**, **9**, **10**, **11A**, **11B**, **12**, **13A**, and **13B** are illustrated using embodiments of the stilted pad structure **102** as in FIG. **1**, it is to be appreciated that FIGS. **5**, **6A-6C**, **7**, **8A**, **8B**, **9**, **10**, **11A**, **11B**, **12**, **13A**, and **13B** may alternatively have embodiments of the stilted pad structure **102** in any of FIGS. **3A-3H**. While FIG. **14** illustrates the stilted pad structure **102** of the first IC chip **502** using embodiments of the stilted pad structure **102** as in FIG. **1**, it is to be appreciated that embodiments of the stilted pad structure **102** in any of FIGS. **3A-3H** may alternatively be used. While FIG. **14** illustrates the stilted pad structure **102** of the second IC chip **702** using embodiments of the stilted pad structure **102** as in FIG. **3B**, it is to be appreciated that embodiments of the stilted pad structure **102** in any of FIGS. **1**, **3A**, and **3C-3H** may alternatively be used. Further, while FIGS. **6B** and **9** illustrate the first IC chip **502** with the photodetectors **602**, the backside trench isolation structure **604**, the color filters **606**, and the composite grid **608**, it is to be appreciated that the first IC chip **502** in any of FIGS. **5**, **6A**, **7**, **8A**, **8B**, **10**, **11A**, **11B**, **12**, **13A**, **13B**, and **14** may alternatively have the photodetectors **602**, the backside trench isolation structure **604**, the color filters **606**, and the composite grid **608** as illustrated in FIGS. **6B** and **9**.

(103) With reference to FIGS. **15-29**, a series of cross-sectional views **1500-2900** of some embodiments of a method for forming an IC chip comprising a stilted pad structure is provided. The method may, for example, form the stilted pad structure as in FIG. **1**

(104) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **1500** of FIG. **15**, a first IC chip **502** is formed. A plurality of photodetectors **602** extends into a frontside **104f** of a semiconductor substrate **104**, and a semiconductor device **506** overlies and is partially defined by the frontside **104f** of the semiconductor substrate **104**. In alternative embodiments, the photodetectors **602** are replaced with additional semiconductor devices **506**. The semiconductor device **506** comprises a gate stack **508** and, while not visible, further comprises a pair of source/drain regions between which the gate stack **508** is laterally sandwiched. A frontside trench isolation structure **106** extends into the frontside **104f** of the semiconductor substrate **104** to separate the photodetectors **602** and the semiconductor device **506** from each other, and a frontside interconnect structure **110** covers and electrically couples to the semiconductor device **506**.

(105) The frontside interconnect structure **110** is embedded in a frontside interconnect dielectric layer **112** and comprises a contact **304**, a plurality of wires **108**, and a plurality of vias **510**. The wires **108** and the vias **510** are respectively grouped into a plurality of wire levels and a plurality of via levels that are alternately stacked over the contact **304**. The frontside interconnect structure **110** further comprises a plurality of hybrid bond pads **706** and a hybrid bond via over the wires **108** and the vias **510**. The hybrid bond via **708** is over a top wire level, and the hybrid bond pads **706** are over the hybrid bond via **708**.

(106) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **1600** of FIG. **16**, a second IC chip **702** is formed. The second IC chip **702** is as the first IC chip **502** is described, except that the second IC chip **702** lacks the photodetectors **602** and has more semiconductor devices **506**. Further, the frontside interconnect structure **110** of the second IC chip **702** and the frontside trench isolation structure **106** of the second IC chip **702** have different layouts than counterparts in the first IC chip **502**.

(107) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **1700** of FIG. **17**, the first IC chip **502** is flipped vertically and is hybrid bonded to the second IC chip **702** at a bond interface **704**. Further, the semiconductor substrate **104** of the first IC chip **502** is thinned from the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104**, thereby reducing a thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104**. The thinning may, for example, be performed by a chemical mechanical polish (CMP) or some

other suitable thinning process.

(108) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **1800** of FIG. **18**, a backside dielectric layer **114** and a backside trench isolation structure **604** are formed on the backside **104b** of the first IC chip **502**. The backside trench isolation structure **604** extends into the backside **104b** of the first IC chip **502** to the frontside trench isolation structure **106** of the first IC chip **502** to separate the photodetectors **602**. The backside dielectric layer **114** blankets the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** and defines the backside trench isolation structure **604**. In some embodiments, the backside dielectric layer **114** is or comprises silicon oxide, a high k dielectric material, some other suitable dielectric(s), or any combination of the foregoing. For example, the backside dielectric layer **114** may be or comprise silicon oxide or some other suitable oxide at a top surface of the backside dielectric layer **114**. In some embodiments, the backside dielectric layer **114** is as described with regard to FIG. **3F**.

(109) A process for forming the backside dielectric layer **114** and a backside trench isolation structure **604** may, for example, comprise: patterning the backside **104b** of the first IC chip **502** to form trenches separating the photodetectors **602**; depositing the backside dielectric layer **114** filling the trenches and blanketing the backside **104b**; and performing a planarization into the backside dielectric layer **114** to flatten a top surface of the backside dielectric layer **114**. Other suitable processes are, however, amenable.

(110) Hereafter, until noted otherwise, the cross-sectional views (e.g., the cross-sectional views **1900-2500** of FIGS. **19-25**) correspond to box E of FIG. **18** to provide an enlarged view of the various processing steps performed to form a stilted pad structure.

(111) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **1900** of FIG. **19**, a first etch is performed selectively into the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** to form a first opening **1902**. The first etch may, for example, be performed selectively by a photolithography/etching process or by some other suitable process.

(112) The first opening **1902** extends through the backside dielectric layer **114** into the semiconductor substrate **104** and overlies a pad wire **108p**. Further, the first opening **1902** is separated from the frontside trench isolation structure **106** by a pad portion **104p** of the semiconductor substrate **104** and exposes a recessed surface **104r** of the semiconductor substrate **104**. The recessed surface **104r** is recessed relative to a top surface of the semiconductor substrate **104** by a separation A, and is elevated relative to a bottom surface of the semiconductor substrate **104** by a separation B. Further, a sum of the separations A and B equals the thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104**. In some embodiments, the separation A is about 1.5 micrometers, about 1-3 micrometers, or some other suitable value, and/or the separation B is about 4.5 micrometers, about 4-10 micrometers, or some other suitable value.

(113) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **2000** of FIG. **20**, a first backside liner layer **118a** and a second backside liner layer **118b** are deposited covering the backside dielectric layer **114** and lining the first opening **1902**. The first and second backside liner layers **118a**, **118b** are different dielectric materials. For example, the first backside liner layer **118a** may be or comprise silicon oxide or some other suitable oxide, whereas the second backside liner layer **118b** may be or comprise silicon nitride or other suitable nitride. In alternative embodiments, the first backside liner layer **118a** or the second backside liner layer **118b** is omitted.

(114) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **2100** of FIG. **21**, a second etch is performed selectively into the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** to form a pair of second openings **2102**. The second etch may, for example, be performed selectively by a photolithography/etching process or by some other suitable process.

(115) The second openings **2102** are at a bottom of the first opening **1902** and have individual widths W less than that of the first opening **1902**. Further, the second openings **2102** extend from the first opening **1902**, through the pad portion **104p** of the semiconductor substrate **104**, to the frontside trench isolation structure **106**. Hence, the second etch stops on the frontside trench

isolation structure **106**. In alternative embodiments, the second openings **2102** also extend through the frontside trench isolation structure **106** to the frontside interconnect dielectric layer **112**. Hence, the second etch stops on the frontside interconnect dielectric layer **112**.

(116) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **2200** of FIG. **22**, a backside spacer layer **2202** is deposited covering the second backside liner layer **118b** and further lining the first and second openings **1902**, **2102**. The backside spacer layer **2202** may, for example, be or comprise silicon oxide, some other suitable oxide and/or dielectric, or any combination of the foregoing.

(117) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **2300** of FIG. **23**, a third etch is performed blanketing the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104**. The third etch removes horizontally extending portions of the backside spacer layer **2202** (see, e.g., FIG. **22**) to form backside spacers **120** from the backside spacer layer **2202**. The backside spacers **120** are on sidewalls of the pad portion **104p** of the semiconductor substrate **104** and are further on sidewalls of the second backside liner layer **118b**. Further, the third etch extends the second openings **2102** to the pad wire **108p** and removes horizontally extending portions of the second backside liner layer **118b** not covered by the backside spacers **120**. In some embodiments, remaining portions of the of the second backside liner layer **118b** may also be regarded as backside spacers. In some embodiments, the third etch further reduces a thickness of the first backside liner layer **118a**.

(118) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **2400** of FIG. **24**, a pad layer **2402** and a pad protection layer **2404** are deposited covering the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** and lining the first and second openings **1902**, **2102** (see, e.g., FIG. **23**). The pad layer **2402** may, for example, be or comprise aluminum copper, copper, aluminum, some other suitable metal(s) and/or conductive material(s), or any combination of the foregoing. The pad protection layer **2404** overlies the pad layer **2402** and may, for example, be or comprise silicon oxynitride, silicon nitride, some other suitable dielectric(s), or any combination of the foregoing.

(119) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **2500** of FIG. **25**, a fourth etch is performed selectively into the pad layer **2402** and the pad protection layer **2404**. The fourth etch forms a stilted pad structure **102** from the pad layer **2402** and further localizes the pad protection layer **2404** atop the stilted pad structure **102**. The fourth etch may, for example, be performed selectively by a photolithography/etching process or by some other suitable patterning process.

(120) The stilted pad structure **102** comprises a pad body **102b** and a pair of pad protrusions **102p**. The pad body **102b** is exposed from the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** and overlies the pad portion **104p** of the semiconductor substrate **104**. Further, the pad body **102b** is separated from sidewalls of surrounding structure and has a top that is flat, except for indents **102i** respectively overlying the pad protrusions **102p**. In alternative embodiments, the indents **102i** are omitted from the top of the pad body **102b**. The pad protrusions **102p** are respectively on opposite sides of the pad body **102b** and extend from a bottom of the pad body **102b** to the pad wire **108p**. By extending to the pad wire **108p**, the pad protrusions **102p** electrically couple the pad body **102b** to the pad wire **108p**. Further, the pad protrusions **102p** bond with the frontside interconnect dielectric layer **112**, the frontside trench isolation structure **106**, and the pad portion **104p** to secure the stilted pad structure **102** in place.

(121) Because the first opening **1902** (better seen at, for example, FIG. **19**) is spaced from the frontside trench isolation structure **106** by the pad portion **104p** of the semiconductor substrate **104**, the pad protrusions **102p** are formed with a length L that is large. If the pad portion **104p** was omitted and the first opening **1902** was formed exposing the frontside trench isolation structure **106**, for example, the length L would be small. Because the length L is large, the bond area between the pad protrusions **102p** and surrounding structure is large. The large bond area may, in turn, increase bondability of the stilted pad structure **102** and reduce the likelihood of delamination.

(122) Because the thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104** is traversed by a combination of the first and second etches (see, e.g., FIGS. **19** and **21**), the first etch may extend into the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** to a depth independent of the thickness T_s . As a result, the

first etch is not subject to costly and timely tuning of parameters for variations in the thickness T_s . Further, a depth to which the pad body **102b** is inset into the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** may be small and backside topography may have a small degree of variation. Because of the small degree of variation, the process window (e.g., resiliency) for forming other structures on the backside **104b** is large and a dielectric filler layer may be omitted from unfilled portions of the first opening **1902**. Further, to the extent that a dielectric filler layer is formed in unfilled portions of the first opening **1902**, the corresponding processing steps do not vary depending on the thickness T_s and are hence not subject to costly and timely tuning of parameters for variations in the thickness T_s .

(123) Hereafter, the cross-sectional views (e.g., the cross-sectional views **2600-2900** of FIGS. **26-29**) expand beyond box E to provide a more expansive view of the various processing steps performed after forming the stilted pad structure **102**. However, for drawing compactness, the second IC chip **702** described above with regard to FIGS. **16-18** is not shown. Hence, even though the cross-sectional views hereafter described do not show the second IC chip **702**, it is to be appreciated that the second IC chip **702** persists out of view.

(124) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **2600** of FIG. **26**, a first grid dielectric layer **610**, a second grid dielectric layer **612**, and a grid metal layer **614** are deposited blanketing the backside **104b** of the first IC chip **502**. The grid metal layer **614** is deposited over the first grid dielectric layer **610**, and the second grid dielectric layer **612** is deposited over the grid metal layer **614**. The first grid dielectric layer **610** and/or the second grid dielectric layer **612** may, for example, be or comprise silicon oxide, some other suitable oxide and/or dielectric, or any combination of the foregoing. In some embodiments, the first grid dielectric layer **610** has a thickness of about 250 angstroms or some other suitable value. The grid metal layer **614** may, for example, be or comprise tungsten and/or some other suitable metal(s).

(125) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **2700** of FIG. **27**, the first grid dielectric layer **610**, the second grid dielectric layer **612**, and the grid metal layer **614** are patterned to form a composite grid **608**. The composite grid **608** comprises a plurality of grid openings **2702**. The grid openings **2702** are individual to and respectively overlie the photodetectors **602**. The patterning may, for example, be performed by a photolithography/etching process or by some other suitable patterning process.

(126) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **2800** of FIG. **28**, a grid liner layer **2802** is deposited blanketing the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104** and lining the grid openings **2702** (see, e.g., FIG. **27**). Further, a plurality of color filters **606** is formed inset into the composite grid **608**. The color filters **606** are individual to and respectively fill the grid openings **2702** over the grid liner layer **2802**. The grid liner layer **2802** may, for example, be or comprise silicon oxide, some other suitable oxide and/or dielectric, or any combination of the foregoing.

(127) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **2900** of FIG. **29**, the grid liner layer **2802** and the pad protection layer **2404** are patterned to form an opening **2902** overlying and exposing the stilted pad structure **102**. The patterning may, for example, be performed by a photolithography/etching process or by some other suitable patterning process.

(128) While FIGS. **15-29** are described with reference to various embodiments of a method, it will be appreciated that the structures shown in FIGS. **15-29** are not limited to the method but rather may stand alone separate of the method. While FIGS. **15-29** are described as a series of acts, it will be appreciated that the order of the acts may be altered in other embodiments. While FIGS. **15-29** illustrate and describe as a specific set of acts, some acts that are illustrated and/or described may be omitted in other embodiments. Further, acts that are not illustrated and/or described may be included in other embodiments.

(129) With reference to FIG. **30**, a block diagram **3000** of some embodiments of the method of FIGS. **15-29** is provided.

(130) At **3002**, a first IC chip is formed, wherein the first IC chip comprises a plurality of

photodetectors and a frontside trench isolation structure extending into a frontside of a semiconductor substrate. See, for example, FIG. 15.

(131) At **3004**, a second IC chip is formed. See, for example, FIG. 16.

(132) At **3006**, the first and second IC chips are bonded together frontside to frontside. See, for example, FIG. 17.

(133) At **3008**, a backside dielectric layer is deposited on a backside of the semiconductor substrate. See, for example, FIG. 18.

(134) At **3010**, a first etch is performed selectively into the backside of the semiconductor substrate to form a first opening overlying and spaced from the frontside trench isolation structure. See, for example, FIG. 19.

(135) At **3012**, a backside liner layer is deposited lining the first opening. See, for example, FIG. 20.

(136) At **3014**, a second etch is performed selectively into the backside of the semiconductor substrate to form a second opening extending from a bottom of the first opening to the frontside trench isolation structure, wherein the second opening has a lesser width than the first opening. See, for example, FIG. 21.

(137) At **3016**, a backside spacer layer is deposited lining the second opening. See, for example, FIG. 22.

(138) At **3018**, a third etch is performed blanketing the backside of the semiconductor substrate to extend the second opening to a pad wire on the frontside of the semiconductor substrate. See, for example, FIG. 23.

(139) At **3020**, a stilted pad structure is formed in the first and second openings, wherein the stilted pad structure has a pad body in the first opening and further has a pad protrusion extending from the pad body, through the second opening, to the pad wire. See, for example, FIGS. 24 and 25.

(140) At **3022**, a composite grid is formed overlying the photodetectors on the backside of the semiconductor substrate. See, for example, FIGS. 26 and 27.

(141) At **3024**, color filters are formed inset into the composite grid. See, for example, FIG. 28.

(142) At **3026**, the stilted pad structure is opened. See, for example, FIG. 29.

(143) While the block diagram **3000** of FIG. 30 is illustrated and described herein as a series of acts or events, it will be appreciated that the illustrated ordering of such acts or events is not to be interpreted in a limiting sense. For example, some acts may occur in different orders and/or concurrently with other acts or events apart from those illustrated and/or described herein. Further, not all illustrated acts may be required to implement one or more aspects or embodiments of the description herein, and one or more of the acts depicted herein may be carried out in one or more separate acts and/or phases.

(144) With reference to FIGS. 31-33, a series of cross-sectional views **3100-3300** of some first alternative embodiments of the method of FIGS. 15-29 is provided in which the stilted pad structure **102** fully fills the first and second openings **1902**, **2102**. The first alternative embodiments may, for example, form the stilted pad structure as in FIG. 3B.

(145) The acts described with regard to FIGS. 15-23 are unchanged in the first alternative embodiments. Therefore, in accordance with the first alternative embodiments, the acts described with regard to FIGS. 15-23 are performed as illustrated and described above. Thereafter, as illustrated by the cross-sectional view **3100** of FIG. 31, the acts described with regard to FIG. 24 are performed, except that the pad layer **2402** is deposited fully filling the first and second openings **1902**, **2102** (see, e.g., FIG. 23) and the pad protection layer **2404** is omitted.

(146) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **3200** of FIG. 32, a planarization is performed into the pad layer **2402**. The planarization forms the stilted pad structure **102** from the pad layer **2402** and with a top surface level with that of the first backside liner layer **118a**. The planarization may, for example, be performed a CMP or some other suitable planarization. Because the top surface is level with that of the first backside liner layer **118a**, backside topography may have a small degree

of variation. Because of the small degree of variation, the process window (e.g., resiliency) for forming other structures on the backside is large.

(147) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **3300** of FIG. **33**, the acts described with regard to FIGS. **26-29** are performed as illustrated and described above.

(148) While FIGS. **31-33** are described with reference to various embodiments of a method, it will be appreciated that the structures shown in FIGS. **31-33** are not limited to the method but rather may stand alone separate of the method. While FIGS. **31-33** are described as a series of acts, it will be appreciated that the order of the acts may be altered in other embodiments. While FIGS. **31-33** illustrate and describe as a specific set of acts, some acts that are illustrated and/or described may be omitted in other embodiments. Further, acts that are not illustrated and/or described may be included in other embodiments.

(149) With reference to FIGS. **34-39**, a series of cross-sectional views **3400-3900** of some second alternative embodiments of the method of FIGS. **15-29** is provided in which a dielectric filler layer overlies the stilted pad structure **102** and fills unfilled portions of the first and second openings **1902**, **2102**. The second alternative embodiments may, for example, form the stilted pad structure as in FIG. **3A**.

(150) The acts described with regard to FIGS. **15-18** are unchanged in the second alternative embodiments. Therefore, in accordance with the second alternative embodiments, the acts described with regard to FIGS. **15-18** are performed as illustrated and described above. Thereafter, as illustrated by the cross-sectional view **3400** of FIG. **34**, a second backside dielectric layer **3402** is deposited covering the backside dielectric layer **114**. The second backside dielectric layer **3402** is a different material type than the backside dielectric layer **114** and may, for example, be or comprise silicon nitride and/or some other suitable dielectric(s).

(151) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **3500** of FIG. **35**, the acts described with regard to FIGS. **19-25** are performed as illustrated and described above.

(152) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **3600** of FIG. **36**, a dielectric filler layer **302** is deposited covering the first backside liner layer **118a** and filling the first and second openings **1902**, **2102** (see, e.g., FIG. **23**) over the stilted pad structure **102**. Further, a planarization is performed into the dielectric filler layer **302** to flatten a top surface of the dielectric filler layer **302**. The dielectric filler layer **302** may, for example, be or comprise silicon oxide, some other suitable oxide and/or dielectric, or any combination of the foregoing. The planarization may, for example, be performed by a CMP or some other suitable planarization. In some embodiments, a thickness of the dielectric filler layer **302** is about 2000 angstroms or some other suitable value outside the first opening **1902** (see, e.g., FIG. **23**).

(153) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **3700** of FIG. **37**, a first etch back is performed into the dielectric filler layer **302** and the first backside liner layer **118a**. The first etch back recesses the top surface of the dielectric filler layer **302** to even with, or about even with, a top surface of the second backside dielectric layer **3402**. Further, the first etch back removes portions the first backside liner layer **118a** atop the second backside dielectric layer **3402**. In some embodiments, the first etch back thins the second backside dielectric layer **3402**. The first etch back may, for example, be performed by wet etching or by some other suitable type of etching.

(154) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **3800** of FIG. **38**, a second etch back is performed into the dielectric filler layer **302** and the second backside dielectric layer **3402**. The second etch back recesses the top surface of the dielectric filler layer **302** to even with, or about even with, a top surface of the backside dielectric layer **114**. Further, the second etch back removes the second backside dielectric layer **3402**. In some embodiments, the second etch back thins the backside dielectric layer **114**. The second etch back may, for example, be performed by dry etching or by some other suitable type of etching.

(155) Because the thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104** is traversed by a combination of the first and second etches (see, e.g., FIGS. **19** and **21**), the first etch may extend into the backside

104b of the semiconductor substrate **104** to a depth independent of the thickness T_s . As a result, a depth to which the pad body **102b** is inset into the backside **104b** of the semiconductor substrate **104**, and hence a thickness of the dielectric filler layer **302**, may be independent of the thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104**. Because the thickness of the dielectric filler layer **302** may be independent of the thickness T_s of the semiconductor substrate **104**, the corresponding processing steps (see, e.g., FIGS. **36-38**) for forming the dielectric filler layer **302** do not depend on the thickness T_s and are hence not subject to costly and timely tuning of parameters for variations in the thickness T_s .

(156) As illustrated by the cross-sectional view **3900** of FIG. **39**, the acts described with regard to FIGS. **26-29** are performed as illustrated and described above.

(157) While FIGS. **34-39** are described with reference to various embodiments of a method, it will be appreciated that the structures shown in FIGS. **34-39** are not limited to the method but rather may stand alone separate of the method. While FIGS. **34-39** are described as a series of acts, it will be appreciated that the order of the acts may be altered in other embodiments. While FIGS. **34-39** illustrate and describe as a specific set of acts, some acts that are illustrated and/or described may be omitted in other embodiments. Further, acts that are not illustrated and/or described may be included in other embodiments.

(158) In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides an IC chip including: a semiconductor substrate; a wire underlying the semiconductor substrate on a frontside of the semiconductor substrate; and a pad structure inset into a backside of the semiconductor substrate that is opposite the frontside, wherein the pad structure includes a pad body and a first pad protrusion, and wherein the first pad protrusion underlies the pad body and protrudes through a portion of the semiconductor substrate towards the wire from the pad body; wherein the pad body overlies the portion of the semiconductor substrate. In some embodiments, the first pad protrusion extends to direct contact with the wire. In some embodiments, the IC chip further includes a plurality of wires grouped into a plurality of wire levels, wherein the wire levels correspond to different elevations, wherein the plurality of wire levels includes a first wire level and a second wire level, wherein the second wire level is separated from the semiconductor substrate by the first wire level and includes the wire. In some embodiments, the IC chip further includes: a trench isolation structure extending into the frontside of the semiconductor substrate; and a contact having a columnar profile, wherein the contact extends from the first pad protrusion to the wire and separates the first pad protrusion from the wire, and wherein the contact and the first pad protrusion directly contact at the trench isolation structure. In some embodiments, the pad structure is exposed from the backside of the semiconductor substrate. In some embodiments, the IC chip further includes a dielectric filler layer overlying the pad structure, and covering a sidewall of the pad structure, on the backside of the semiconductor substrate, wherein the dielectric filler layer defines a pad opening overlying and exposing the pad body. In some embodiments, a sidewall of the pad structure is exposed to an ambient environment of the IC chip. In some embodiments, the IC chip further includes a dielectric film on the backside of the semiconductor substrate and having a first segment and a second segment, wherein the first and second segments extend along individual sidewalls of the semiconductor substrate, and wrap around individual bottom corners of the pad structure, respectively on opposite sides of the pad structure, wherein a top surface of the pad structure is level with a top surface of the dielectric film, and wherein the top surface of the pad structure is flat and extends continuously from the first segment to the second segment. In some embodiments, the pad structure further includes a second protrusion that is separated from the first pad protrusion by the portion of the semiconductor substrate, wherein the second protrusion protrudes through the portion of the semiconductor substrate towards the wire from the pad body.

(159) In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides an IC package including a first IC chip, wherein the first IC chip includes: a first semiconductor substrate; a trench isolation structure extending into a frontside of the first semiconductor substrate; a first interconnect structure

underlying the first semiconductor substrate on the frontside of the first semiconductor substrate; and a pad structure inset into a backside of the first semiconductor substrate that is opposite the frontside, wherein the pad structure includes a first pad protrusion protruding through the trench isolation structure towards the first interconnect structure; wherein the first pad protrusion extends along a sidewall of the first semiconductor substrate that overlies the trench isolation structure and that underlies the pad structure. In some embodiments, the IC package further includes a dielectric spacer extending along the sidewall of the first semiconductor substrate, from top to bottom, and extending from the sidewall to the first pad protrusion. In some embodiments, the pad structure includes a second pad protrusion protruding through the trench isolation structure towards the first interconnect structure, wherein the sidewall of the first semiconductor substrate is between the first and second pad protrusions. In some embodiments, the IC package further includes a wire bond structure directly contacting the pad structure on the backside of the first semiconductor substrate. In some embodiments, the IC package further includes a second IC chip bonded to, and on the frontside of the first semiconductor substrate, wherein the second IC chip includes a second semiconductor substrate and a second interconnect structure, wherein the second interconnect structure includes a plurality of wires and a plurality of vias, wherein the wires and the vias are alternately stacked, and wherein first pad protrusion protrudes to a first wire in the second interconnect structure. In some embodiments, the first pad protrusion protrudes to a first via in the first interconnect structure, wherein the first via separates the first pad protrusion from a first wire in the first interconnect structure and extends from the first pad protrusion to the first wire.

(160) In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a method for forming a pad structure, the method including: forming a trench isolation structure extending into a frontside of a semiconductor substrate; performing a first etch selectively into the semiconductor substrate from a backside of the semiconductor substrate opposite the frontside to form a first opening, wherein the semiconductor substrate has a recessed surface in the first opening at completion of the first etch, and wherein the recessed surface extends laterally along a bottom of the first opening from a first side of the first opening to a second side of the first opening opposite the first side; performing a second etch selectively into the recessed surface to form a second opening with a lesser width than the first opening and extending to the trench isolation structure; and forming a pad structure in the first and second openings and protruding to a conductive feature on the frontside of the semiconductor substrate through the second opening. In some embodiments, the method further includes: depositing dielectric spacer layer lining the first and second openings and spaced from the conductive feature; and performing a third etch to extend the second opening to the conductive feature, wherein the third etch is a blanket etch performed with the dielectric spacer layer in place. In some embodiments, the method further includes: depositing a conductive layer fully filling the first and second openings and covering a backside surface of the semiconductor substrate elevated relative to the recessed surface; and performing a planarization into a conductive layer to remove the conductive layer from the backside surface, wherein the planarization forms the pad structure from the conductive layer. In some embodiments, the method further includes: depositing a conductive layer lining the first and second openings; and performing a third etch selectively into the conductive layer to form the pad structure from the conductive layer, wherein the pad structure has a sidewall facing a neighboring sidewall of the semiconductor substrate and separated from the neighboring sidewall by an unfilled portion of the first opening. In some embodiments, the method further includes: depositing a dielectric filler layer covering the pad structure and filling the unfilled portion of the first opening; and performing a fourth etch selectively into the dielectric filler layer to form a third opening exposing the pad structure.

(161) 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. A method for forming a pad structure, the method comprising: forming a trench isolation structure extending into a frontside of a semiconductor substrate; performing a first etch selectively into the semiconductor substrate from a backside of the semiconductor substrate opposite the frontside of the semiconductor substrate to form a first opening, wherein the semiconductor substrate has a recessed surface in the first opening at completion of the first etch, and wherein the recessed surface extends laterally along a bottom of the first opening from a first side of the first opening to a second side of the first opening opposite the first side of the first opening; performing a second etch selectively into the recessed surface to form a second opening with a lesser width than the first opening and extending to the trench isolation structure; and forming a pad structure in the first and second openings and protruding to a conductive feature on the frontside of the semiconductor substrate through the second opening.
2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising: depositing a dielectric spacer layer lining the first and second openings and spaced from the conductive feature; and performing a third etch to extend the second opening to the conductive feature, wherein the third etch is a blanket etch performed with the dielectric spacer layer in place.
3. The method according to claim 1, further comprising: depositing a conductive layer fully filling the first and second openings and covering a backside surface of the semiconductor substrate elevated relative to the recessed surface; and performing a planarization into the conductive layer to remove the conductive layer from the backside surface of the semiconductor substrate, wherein the planarization forms the pad structure from the conductive layer.
4. The method according to claim 1, further comprising: depositing a conductive layer lining the first and second openings; and performing a third etch selectively into the conductive layer to form the pad structure from the conductive layer, wherein the pad structure has a sidewall facing a neighboring sidewall of the semiconductor substrate and separated from the neighboring sidewall of the semiconductor substrate by an unfilled portion of the first opening.
5. The method according to claim 4, further comprising: depositing a dielectric filler layer covering the pad structure and filling the unfilled portion of the first opening; and performing a fourth etch selectively into the dielectric filler layer to form a third opening exposing the pad structure.
6. The method according to claim 1, wherein the conductive feature is a first wire, and wherein the first wire is level with a second wire that is electrically coupled to a semiconductor device in the semiconductor substrate by a via extending from the second wire to the semiconductor device.
7. The method according to claim 1, further comprising: forming an interconnect structure on the frontside of the semiconductor substrate; and bonding an integrated circuit (IC) chip to the semiconductor substrate through the interconnect structure, wherein the first etch is performed after the bonding.
8. A method, comprising: forming a conductive feature on a frontside of a semiconductor substrate; performing a first etch into the semiconductor substrate, from a backside of the semiconductor substrate opposite the frontside of the semiconductor substrate, to form a first opening, wherein the first opening is vertically separated from the conductive feature by a portion of the semiconductor substrate at completion of the first etch; performing a second etch into the portion of the semiconductor substrate to form a second opening extending entirely through the portion of the semiconductor substrate, from the first opening, wherein the semiconductor substrate has a sidewall in the second opening at completion of the second etch, and wherein a front edge of the sidewall is

elevated relative to a front surface of the semiconductor substrate, which is on the frontside of the semiconductor substrate; performing a third etch to extend the second opening to the conductive feature after the second etch; and forming a pad body and a pad protrusion respectively in the first opening and the second opening, wherein the pad protrusion protrudes from the pad body to the conductive feature.

9. The method according to claim 8, further comprising: forming a third opening extending through the portion of the semiconductor substrate, from the first opening to the conductive feature, concurrently while forming of the second opening; and forming an additional pad protrusion in the third opening and protruding from the pad body to the conductive feature.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein the third opening and the second opening are respectively on opposite sides of the first opening and have line-shaped top geometries.

11. The method according to claim 8, further comprising: depositing a conductive layer lining the first and second openings, wherein the conductive layer lining the second opening forms the pad protrusion; and performing a fourth etch into the conductive layer to form the pad body.

12. The method according to claim 8, further comprising: forming wires and vias on the frontside of the semiconductor substrate, wherein the wires are grouped into a plurality of wire levels, wherein the vias are grouped into a plurality of via levels alternately stacked with the plurality of wire levels, and wherein the conductive feature is in a wire level amongst the plurality of wire levels that is closest to the semiconductor substrate.

13. The method according to claim 8, further comprising: depositing a sidewall spacer layer lining individual sidewalls of the semiconductor substrate in the first and second openings, wherein the individual sidewalls of the semiconductor substrate include the sidewall of the semiconductor substrate in the second opening; and performing an etch into the sidewall spacer layer to etch back the sidewall spacer layer and to form a sidewall spacer on the sidewall of the semiconductor substrate, wherein the third etch is performed with the sidewall spacer in place.

14. The method according to claim 8, further comprising: forming a trench isolation structure extending into the frontside of the semiconductor substrate, wherein the second opening overlies and exposes a top-surface of the trench isolation structure at completion of the second etch.

15. A method, comprising: forming a trench isolation structure in a substrate; performing a first patterning process to form a first opening in the substrate, wherein the first opening overlies and is spaced from the trench isolation structure at completion of the first patterning process; performing a second patterning process to form a second opening extending through the trench isolation structure, from the first opening to an interconnect structure; depositing a conductive layer in the first opening and the second opening; and performing a third patterning process to pattern the conductive layer into a conductive pad; wherein the substrate comprises a semiconductor layer, and wherein the first patterning process patterns the semiconductor layer to form the first opening extending into the semiconductor layer.

16. The method according to claim 15, wherein the conductive pad directly and laterally contacts a sidewall of the trench isolation structure.

17. The method according to claim 15, wherein the second patterning process comprises: etching the substrate to form the second opening extending from the first opening to a surface of the trench isolation structure, wherein the etching stops at the surface of the trench isolation structure; forming a dielectric liner on sidewalls of the substrate in the second opening after the etching; and extending the second opening to the interconnect structure after the forming of the dielectric liner.

18. The method according to claim 15, wherein a portion of the substrate and the trench isolation structure underlie the conductive pad and overlie the interconnect structure.

19. The method according to claim 15, further comprising: depositing a dielectric filler layer covering the conductive pad and completely filling unfilled portions of the first opening, wherein the dielectric filler layer extends along outermost sidewalls of the conductive pad in the first opening.

20. The method according to claim 15, wherein the semiconductor layer has a surface at a bottom of the first opening, which overlies and is spaced from the trench isolation structure after the first patterning process, and wherein the trench isolation structure extends into the semiconductor layer.
