

Perpetual branch approved

By Robert F. Levey

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After nearly a year and a half of controversy, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board last week approved construction of a savings and loan office at the crossroads of Adams-Morgan.

The office will be the 11th branch of Perpetual Federal Savings and Loan Association, the city's richest. It will be built on the southwest corner of 18th Street and Columbia Road NW. According to Perpetual president Thomas J. Owen, construction will begin within the next month. The office is expected to open within nine months.

Perpetual's application was opposed in lengthy hearings before the FHLBB by two dozen community residents and organizations. Opponents contended that

See PERPETUAL, Page 4, Col. 3

Perpetual S&L office in Adams-Morgan approved

PERPETUAL, From Page 1

Perpetual's loan policies in the racially and economically mixed area had discriminated against poorer applicants.

In negotiations between Perpetual and community groups, the savings and loan agreed to:

- Hire bilingual staff at its proposed branch.
- Permit vendors who now sell fruit and vegetables on the sidewalk in front of the site to continue to operate.
- Provide home loans of as much as 90 per cent of the purchase price.
- Provide so-called "wraparound" loans covering both purchase and any necessary reconstruction.
- Establish a branch advisory committee composed of neighborhood residents.

Owen said Perpetual is "looking forward" to operating in Adams-Morgan

and Mt. Pleasant. He said the agreement between Perpetual and the community "is not something exclusive to that neighborhood. Most of the stuff we're already doing." He added that Perpetual "reserves the right to put in good underwriting standards. . . I don't want a 90 per cent loan on a tarpaper shack."

Spokesmen for community groups were similarly hopeful. All said that Perpetual had proved its good faith during the year of negotiations. Spokesmen added that the branch advisory committee should prove useful in stemming what they call the "Georgetownization" of the neighborhood.

Perpetual's application was approved by the FHLBB at its regular Aug. 18 meeting. Chairman Robert H. McKinney and member Garth Marston both voted aye. The third board seat is vacant.